

**QUEENSLAND'S COLD WARRIOR: THE TURBULENT DAYS OF VINCENT**

**CLAIR GAIR, 1901-1980**

**BY**

**BRIAN F STEVENSON**

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own independent research, and that all sources which have been consulted are acknowledged in the bibliography. The material has not been submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university.

-----

## **DEDICATION**

*This is for Carol*

*Certain facts, however, which have eluded most writers altogether, or have been mentioned only haphazardly by others, or are recorded only in decrees or in ancient votive inscriptions, I have tried to collect with care. In doing this my object is not to accumulate useless detail, but to hand down whatever may serve to make my subject's character and temperament better understood.*

Plutarch, *Nicias* 1. <sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Plutarch. *The rise and fall of Athens: nine Greek lives by Plutarch*. London: Penguin, 1960, p 208. Translated by Ian Scott-Kilvert.

*...of Vincent Clair Gair it may well be said that he was a man who walked with Kings and lost the common touch.*

*Legion Journal, May 1957.*

*I have walked with kings and queens and never lost the common touch.*

Vince Gair, *Age* 6 December 1977.

*Christ enjoins us to love our enemies. Vincent Clair Gair belonged to the Old Testament.*

Father Barney McLaughlin, panegyric for Vince Gair, November 1980. Quoted by Jim Killen in *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates* House of Representatives, 25 November 1980 pp 39-40.

*His critics have bled him to death and bottled his blood.*

Nell Gair, *Herald* (Melbourne), 17 October 1981.

*As a lad I was taught – and I still believe – that:*

*“The harder you’re thrown, the higher you’ll bounce,  
Be proud of the blackened eye;  
It isn’t the fact that you’re beaten that counts,  
But how did you fight – and why?”*

Vince Gair, after losing his seat in the State election of 1960, *Standard* (Brisbane) 8 June 1960.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

To paraphrase something said on another occasion, and in a far wider context: the finishing of this thesis is one for the true believers.

First and foremost among the believers is my gracious wife Carol, who provided me with new leases on all aspects of my life that were so necessary to bring this project to its conclusion after talking about it for almost a quarter of a century. As a native born American, the quarrels of Australian politicians of over a generation ago should have meant little to her, but she gave up much of her time with me and gave me support and encouragement in all areas until I thought my work was properly done.

My supervisor, John Wanna, also believed, though at times he may have rued the day in 1998 that he suggested the project, the university and the supervisor. His suggestions, corrections and guidance were invaluable, and his patience with my frustratingly slow start would have tested lesser supervisors. My thanks also to two anonymous examiners for their perceptive comments and suggestions.

Mum and Dad, you believed as well, and gave me support through some interesting times till I was ready to tackle this properly. Thanks for your hospitality in Brisbane on my frequent research visits once the project was properly underway. I only regret that even the ninety-one years and four days that Dad was alive were not a long enough time for him to see the project completed. He left us suddenly on the evening of 12 October 2006. Dad, till we meet together again in the happy hunting grounds, to part no more – I love you.

As always, librarians, a fraternity to which I am proud to belong, were cheerful and forthcoming with their assistance to one of their own – they are like that with everybody! From the State Library of Queensland, State Librarian Lea Giles-Peters was generous with the resources of that institution, and Lynn Meyers, Angelo Comino, Dianne Byrne were generous with their reference and retrieval skills. I have forgiven Dr Leanne Day for her temerity in earning her doctorate before I did and thank her for her assistance and her wonderful example, which inspired me to finish as well (eventually.) Rosemary Mammino unearthed unusual material for me at Education Queensland's History Unit on the Gair government and Queensland education: more extensive use of this material will be made in a forthcoming article in the *Australian and New Zealand History of Education Society Journal*.

At the Queensland Parliamentary Library, Parliamentary Librarian Nick Bannenberg was kindly, encouraging and profoundly empathetic during the early stages of this project. His successor, Mary Seefried, gave generous access to an ex-staff member, and researchers Tim Moroney, Suzanne Campbell, Zachary Dadic and Ros Bailey all found material for me. Deb Stumm and other staff at the Fryer Library, University of Queensland, provided access to the wealth of unpublished information in theses written for that institution, and Laurie McNeice went above and beyond the call of duty by looking for, finding and sending on an important document (atypically misfiled in the system) weeks after I had forgotten even asking for it. Niles Elvery, Kevin Brown and Elizabeth Hawkins at the Queensland State Archives all provided valuable assistance. At the National Library of Australia, I am indebted to Bronwyn Ryan and Sue McNeill and others of the Manuscripts Section and the Petherick

Reading Room. Shona Dewar from the State Library of Victoria facilitated my access to the Democratic Labor Party papers held in that institution. I had a few fruitful days in the Mitchell Library in Sydney, and the librarians there showed me the same courtesy and professionalism that their colleagues elsewhere displayed. Thanks are due also to Carolyn Tredrea, and the staff at the James Cook University, Townsville for their assistance with key extracts from the papers of Senator Ian Wood.

Scholars Tracey Arklay, Brian Costar, David Gibson and Maurice French were all generous in the loan of research materials from their own projects. Manfred Cross and Tim Moroney gave generously of their time to read the manuscript and make suggestions. Connie Healey provided me with some valuable and interesting recollections. Paul Reynolds provided some guidance in matters relating to the DLP. In other areas, the generous contributions of my wise and valued friends Colin Walls and Kerry Muston, along with Grace Kerr and Rosemary Byers, daughter of Frank Waters, were indispensable. My thanks to them all.

Finally, this project would not have been possible without the assiduous groundwork and the inspirational publications of that giant among Queensland political historians, the late (and much missed) Dr Denis Murphy. My hope for the present work is that it displays some indication of the knowledge and research techniques he imparted to me, both in person, and through his published works, which will stand forever as testimony to his diligence, integrity and scholarship.



## A SPECIAL NOTE ON QUOTATIONS

I have quoted extensively from all sorts of sources in this work, and while every effort has been made to keep quotes scrupulously accurate, some slight tinkering has been necessary in the interests of clarity.

Until well into the 1960s the *Courier-Mail* insisted on referring to Australia's oldest political party as the Labour Party, in the British fashion, although the Americanised spelling of Labor had been officially in use since 1918. Rather than littering the landscape with [sic]s, I have simply used the conventional spelling where appropriate, and without annotating the change. Gair's breakaway group, the Queensland Labor Party used the American spelling, as did the Democratic Labor Party into which it was merged. I have not been able to find any reference as to why the American spelling was preferred, and doubt that this crucial issue was ever discussed.

Of course, when referring to the labour movement, or divisions of labour, etc, the 'u' in the word has been retained.

Occasionally a quotation has included a misspelt name or other word, or required a strategically placed comma for greater clarity. Archaic spellings such as 'phantasy' have been modernised. The writers and printers of two generations ago were a lot fonder of capitalizing nouns such as state, government, and parliament than are we: in adhering to more modern forms of usage I have dispensed with many such capitalisations. I have made such corrections without comment on most occasions.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

### **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW...12**

- 1.1 INTRODUCTION...12**
- 1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW...23**

### **CHAPTER TWO: THE EARLY YEARS, 1901-1932...45**

- 2.1 ORIGINS OF THE GAIR FAMILY...46**
- 2.2 THE EDUCATION OF YOUNG VINCENT...52**
- 2.3 PARENTAL INFLUENCE AND POLITICAL EXPERIENCES...58**
- 2.4 CATHOLICS AND THE LABOR PARTY...62**
- 2.5 ROCKHAMPTON IN THE EARLY YEARS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY...64**
- 2.6 WILLIAM KIDSTON...66**
- 2.7 GAIR'S EARLY RAILWAY CAREER...70**
- 2.8 AN ACTIVE YOUNG MAN...72**
- 2.9 THE MOORE GOVERNMENT AND MCGROARTY IN SOUTH BRISBANE...76**
- 2.10 CANDIDATE FOR SOUTH BRISBANE...80**
- 2.11 RINGBARKING MCGROARTY...84**

### **CHAPTER THREE: THE BACKBENCH YEARS, 1932-1942: 'A YOUNG, VIGOROUS AND WIDE-EYED POLITICIAN' ...87**

- 3.1 THE LOCAL MEMBER...88**
- 3.2 A FATEFUL DECISION...91**
- 3.3 EARLY YEARS IN PARLIAMENT...93**
- 3.4 LABOR UNASSAILABLE...105**
- 3.5 THE PROTESTANT LABOR PARTY...108**
- 3.6 LATER BACKBENCH YEARS...112**

### **CHAPTER FOUR: THE MINISTERIAL YEARS, 1942-1952...115**

- 4.1 THE MINISTER FOR MINES...116**
- 4.2 THE CABINET'S HARD MAN – MINISTER FOR LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT...119**
- 4.3 GAIR VERSUS COLIN CLARK...130**
- 4.4 THE 40 HOUR WEEK...137**
- 4.5 THE MINISTER FOR HOUSEWIVES...140**

### **CHAPTER FIVE: GAIR AND THE PEOPLE, 1952-1957...147**

- 5.1 INTRODUCTION...149**
- 5.2 THE SUCCESSION...152**
- 5.3 GAIR AS ADMINISTRATOR...154**
- 5.4 GAIR THE AUTHORITARIAN?...158**
- 5.5 GAIR AND THE ELECTORATE...161**
- 5.6 GAIR AND EDUCATION...166**
- 5.7 GAIR AND THE ECONOMY, BUDGETING, RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND RELATIONS WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT...177**

- 5.8 GAIR THE PARLIAMENTARIAN...187
- 5.9 GAIR, CIVIL LIBERTIES AND CENSORSHIP...190
- 5.10 GAIR AND PUBLIC RELATIONS...195
- 5.11 GAIR AND THE ROYAL VISIT...197

## **CHAPTER SIX: THE PREMIER AND THE PARTY: GAIR AND THE LABOR PARTY SPLIT IN QUEENSLAND**

### **PART ONE: TO BUILD A FIRE, 1920 - 11 NOVEMBER 1955...201**

- 6.1 INTRODUCTION...202
- 6.2 THE COMMUNIST PENETRATION OF THE LABOR PARTY...203
- 6.3 THE ORIGINS OF THE MOVEMENT...210
- 6.4 COMMUNISM IN IMMEDIATE POST WAR QUEENSLAND...217
- 6.5 THE FORMATION OF THE INDUSTRIAL GROUPS...219
- 6.6 THE SUCCESS OF THE INDUSTRIAL GROUPS...222
- 6.7 THE DECLINE AND OUTLAWING OF THE GROUPS...228
- 6.8 THE AWU AND BUKOWSKI AGAINST THE GAIR GOVERNMENT...233
- 6.9 THE TRADES AND LABOUR COUNCIL AGAINST THE GAIR GOVERNMENT...243
- 6.10 THE CASE OF THE INDUSTRIAL COURT...246
- 6.11 GAIR'S ENEMIES MARSHALL THEIR FORCES...248
- 6.12 THE PROBLEMATIC ISSUE OF THREE WEEKS LEAVE...250

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: THE PREMIER AND THE PARTY: GAIR AND THE LABOR PARTY SPLIT IN QUEENSLAND**

### **PART TWO: CONFLAGRATION: FROM 11 NOVEMBER 1955 TO 3 AUGUST 1957...255**

- 7.1 THE ISSUE OF OUTSIDE DICTATION...256
- 7.2 THE CONVENTION OF 1956...261
- 7.3 THE ELECTION OF 1956...270
- 7.4 THE PASTORAL STRIKE: 'BUKOWSKI VS GAIR IN 1956'...271
- 7.5 THREE WEEKS LEAVE: FOR AND AGAINST...281
- 7.6 LATE 1956: GAIR'S SUPPORT BASE DIMINISHES: OTHER CRISES...292
- 7.7 SHOULD GAIR HAVE BEEN EXPELLED?...311
- 7.8 THE WALSH FACTOR...319
- 7.9 GAIR'S PERSONALITY AND OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SPLIT...321
- 7.10 THE COALITION THAT NEVER WAS...325
- 7.11 A MEMORABLE PARLIAMENTARY SESSION...328
- 7.12 ELECTORAL OBLIVION...332
- 7.13 THE AFTERMATH...343

## **CHAPTER EIGHT: GAIR IN ECLIPSE, 1957-1964...348**

- 8.1 INTRODUCTION...349
- 8.2 A FADING CAUSE...350
- 8.3 RUMOURS OF RECONCILIATION...353
- 8.4 THE QLP: DISUNITY AND DECLINE...362
- 8.5 THE ELECTORAL REDISTRIBUTION OF 1959...364
- 8.6 THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN OF 1960...368
- 8.7 A NEW CAREER...379
- 8.8 PREFERENCES FOR SALE...383

- 8.9 RUNNING FOR THE SENATE, 1961...386
- 8.10 MERGING WITH THE DLP...393
- 8.11 RUNNING FOR THE SENATE, 1964...398
- 8.12 BACK INTO PARLIAMENT...399

## **CHAPTER NINE: GAIR THE SENATOR, 1965-1974...402**

- 9.1 INTRODUCTION...403
- 9.2 FIRST DAYS IN THE SENATE...405
- 9.3 GAIR AND FOREIGN POLICY AND DEFENCE...406
- 9.4 KEEPING THE NEXUS AND FORESTALLING AN ELECTION ... 427
- 9.5 THE ISSUE OF PREFERENCES...432
- 9.6 GAIR, THE DLP AND SOCIAL WELFARE...438
- 9.7 GAIR, THE DLP AND THE ISSUE OF STATE AID TO INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS...441
- 9.8 THE BALANCE OF POWER MAN...445
- 9.9 GAIR'S DECLINE AND FALL FROM THE DLP PARLIAMENTARY LEADERSHIP...450

## **CHAPTER TEN: DECLINE, RETIREMENT AND DEATH...467**

- 10.1 A SURPRISING JOB OFFER...468
- 10.2 GOUGH WHITLAM'S MATHEMATICAL MOTIVE...476
- 10.3 TUMULTOUS REACTION...477
- 10.4 A SURFEIT OF PRAWNS...481
- 10.5 GAIR'S TRAIL OF DESTRUCTION...493
- 10.6 GAIR THE AMBASSADOR...496
- 10.7 GAIR'S DIPLOMATIC 'SILENCES' ...501
- 10.8 RECALLED TO AUSTRALIA...503
- 10.9 THE LAST YEARS...505
- 10.10 DEATH...507
- 10.11 THE MEASURE OF A MAN...510

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY...518**

## **APPENDICES...552**

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

He had an amazing life.

Even for a politician, subject more than most mortals to the random rigours and exigencies of his times, Vincent Clair Gair had an amazing life. No less a pundit than Alan Reid, the doyen of Australian political journalists, once wrote 'If Gair's life story were written as fiction, most publishers would reject it as unbelievable.'<sup>2</sup> Near the end of his career, another journalist said that Gair could 'claim a career that will be legendary even in the richness of Labor party mythology.'<sup>3</sup>

A 1953 newspaper profile on Gair remarked on how he started out with no special advantages, with no 'golden spade in his cradle with which to dig steps to the heights from the hard rock of life and circumstance.' When asked how, given his ordinary circumstances, he had managed to become premier of Queensland he said simply: 'It was probably a gradual swim into the central pool from the outer shallows, so to speak.'<sup>4</sup> Gair's time in the 'central pool' would be a turbulent and eventful one: in 1953, it had barely started.

During Gair's life, he encountered dreadful personal tragedies, all-encompassing electoral triumphs and crushing electoral defeats. The first defeat cost him his premiership: the second, his place in state parliament. But Gair made what was

---

<sup>2</sup> *Bulletin* 13 April 1974.

<sup>3</sup> *Australian* 3 April 1974.

<sup>4</sup> *Truth* 20 November 1953.

probably, except for that of Sir Robert Menzies, the greatest political comeback in twentieth century Australian political history. For a few years, he was notionally the most powerful man in Australia: later, for a few weeks, he was a national joke. In his time Gair, probably unnecessarily, sacrificed one political career for a principle, but gained, in many eyes, a reputation for courage and honour. But he later sacrificed his reputation as well, for what most considered little more than a bribe.

On his stormy political journey, Vince Gair displayed the best and the worst characteristics of politicians everywhere. He was capable of great political courage, painstaking diligence, patience, kindness, reverence, self-parody, sentimentality, reliability, industry, steadfastness, humour, gregariousness, decency, generosity and compassion. But the darker version of Gair at times showed duplicity, overindulgence, coarseness, pomposity, stubbornness, lechery, hypocrisy, greed, arrogance, intemperance, dissembling, intolerance and a political thuggery that was simultaneously of the most refined and brutal kind. Such, perhaps, is humanity.

Politicians such as Gair are no longer effective or notable forces in our political environment. At the time of writing (2007), of serving Federal parliamentarians, only Wilson Tuckey, MHR and Senator Bill Heffernan spring to mind as being even vaguely comparable to Gair: unrefined, overly belligerent at times, but known to have exhibited courageous individualism. In the long term, history will almost certainly regard them as minor figures. In the early part of the twenty-first century, where even tertiary education is no longer regarded a hallmark of particular affluence, most politicians of both the Labor and non-Labor parties have at least the veneer of refinement that higher education generally provides. In the age of television and the

five-second sound bite, the days of the ranting soapbox demagogue, enthusiastic and sometimes brawling habitu  of the lively and much heckled political proceedings in community halls and on street corners are gone.

Political leaders are more personally removed from the physical presence of their constituents than ever before. We know them now mostly as the ‘talking heads’ on the news bulletins, not as flesh and blood people that most of us personally encounter. Before 11 September 2001, it was extremely unlikely that this situation would ever be reversed: after that date, reversal was impossible.

Less than twenty years ago, an ambitious politician named Paul Keating remarked that he had better things to do than to trip over the electrical cords of television cameras in shopping centers. In such an environment, it seems likely that our future leaders will be required, at the very least, the ability to demonstrate qualities friendly to the visual media. There may never again be a prominent place for a less than refined political bruiser, even one with indisputable and significant redeeming features such as Vince Gair. Perhaps this makes it even more desirable that, for the first time, his story is comprehensively told.

\*

\*

\*

In the winter of 1981, partly as a fundraising exercise, and partly as yet another avenue to lift the public profile of the Queensland branch of the Australian Labor Party, party president Denis Murphy arranged for the production of a commemorative tea towel featuring outstanding Labor premiers of the state. Six of the eight Labor

premiers that had served to that time were featured: T J Ryan, E G 'Red Ted' Theodore, William McCormack, William Forgan-Smith, Frank Cooper and 'Ned' Hanlon. Murphy said of these six: 'They were chosen for their continued general standing within the party.'

Two premiers were omitted. One was William Gillies, a decent but unmemorable leader who was premier for seven months in 1925. The other was Vincent Clair Gair, then Labor's last serving premier.<sup>5</sup>

As a Labor member and premier, Gair's accomplishments were noteworthy. Within the living memory of many, as minister for labour and industry, he had introduced the 40-hour week. As premier from 1952 to 1957 Gair led the party to two successive victories that would not be surpassed in terms of voting percentages until the Goss victory of 1989, and in proportions of seats until the Beattie victory of 2001. Murphy, a more than accomplished political historian as well as party president, had lately written that Gair was 'a capable administrator and was willing to legislate directly for changes that would benefit working men and their families.'<sup>6</sup> Yet his own party did not deem his accomplishments worthy of acknowledgment on a tea towel less than 24 years after he had left the premier's chair.

The tea towel incident would not be the only time that Gair's worthwhile achievements for his party were symbolically airbrushed. In 1987, Wayne Swan,

---

<sup>5</sup> *Courier-Mail* 27 June 1981.

<sup>6</sup> D J Murphy, 'The 1957 Split: "A Drop in the Ocean in Political History"', in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and C A Hughes, eds. *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland, 1915-57*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980.



academic and later a Labor Federal parliamentarian, wrote of Queensland's Labor premiers that:

*[W]ith the exception of Gair, they provided for Queenslanders the highest real standard of living, the most progressive social welfare system and some of the most enlightened industrial legislation in the country, despite the backdrop of a difficult economic climate and hostile reaction from big business and conservative federal governments.*<sup>7</sup>

Others not within the Labor tradition have been even less kind and more dismissive to Gair's memory. A 2004 profile of Premier Peter Beattie, in a very brief reference to other premiers referred fleetingly to 'rogues such as Vince Gair' though Gair's 1953 win was also mentioned.<sup>8</sup> In 1990 former Prime Minister John Gorton described him as 'a terrible fellow'<sup>9</sup>: Sir Robert Menzies dismissed him as a 'conceited little booby.'<sup>10</sup> In 2001, Gair was remembered as 'a coarse and corrupt political bruiser' and a 'grub' whose appointment as Ambassador to Ireland was 'hardly a fair exchange' to that country.<sup>11</sup> Even less flatteringly, in 2003 it was said that 'Gair was easily bribed, a quality which sat well with his others – drunkenness, lechery and hypocrisy.'<sup>12</sup> One journalist claimed in 2002 that Gair was the inspiration for Barry Humphries's appalling (if riveting) creation, corrupt, lecherous and drunken emissary Sir Les Patterson, although the character was introduced to the world in 1973, the year before Gair's controversial ambassadorial appointment.<sup>13</sup> But journalist and military

---

<sup>7</sup> Wayne Swan, 'A future for Labor in Queensland', *Labor forum* June 1987.

<sup>8</sup> *Courier-Mail* 26 June 2004.

<sup>9</sup> Gerald Henderson, *Menzies's child: the Liberal Party of Australia, 1944-1994*. St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1994, p 202

<sup>10</sup> David McNicoll, *Luck's a fortune: an autobiography*. Sydney: Wildcat Press, 1979, p 219. McNicoll was, however, criticized for interviewing Menzies and reporting things like this when Menzies's 'anecdote' was, allegedly, well advanced. *Australian* 8 November 2000.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Ryan, 'The Whitlam Years: a Retrospect', *National Observer*, Issue 48, Autumn 2001.

<sup>12</sup> *Courier-mail*, 30 April 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Cynthia Lanham, 'Herron Tipped for Vatican Post', *Sydney Morning Herald* 6 August 2002: Douglas Atton, '10 Things You Didn't Know About Barry Humphries, Entertainer', *Weekend Australian Magazine* 3-4 July 2004. This does not mean, of course, that later 'refinements' to the

historian Peter Charlton, no fan of the man he described as ‘the truculent, aggressive, bitter, ruthless premier’ simply went too far when he sneered in 2002 that Gair had ‘avoided the temptations of heroism during World War I’: Gair was not old enough to enlist until three and a half months after the Armistice.<sup>14</sup>

Despite his achievements, it is unsurprising that Gair is not always remembered favourably. Twice in his lifetime, Gair was expelled from political parties in circumstances that he could, particularly the second time, have avoided. This left him loathed by his former colleagues, distrusted by his former opponents and highly regarded by comparatively few. In addition, particularly in his later years, Gair was undeniably subject to human failings, which dulled the lustre of his positive earlier achievements.

The central theme of this thesis is that Gair’s limitations and lack of vision over his thirty-eight years in Parliament contributed immeasurably to the modesty of his political achievements. This is despite his being frequently in positions of either direct power, or in positions where he could wield great influence. Gair’s long term influence, with the exception of his role in the schismatic 1957 Labor split in Queensland, was a lot slighter than might be expected from an electorally successful premier and, later, a strategically placed senator. Yet he was a capable administrator, who managed to align himself with the party that was in power, or to hold the balance of power for thirty-five of his thirty-eight years in state and federal parliament.

---

Humphries character did not use Gair for inspiration: Sir Les, best known as Australia’s ‘cultural attaché to the London Court of St James’, was, in his first incarnation, cultural amenities manager at the South Sydney Leagues Club.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Charlton, ‘Power Players’, *Courier-Mail* 14 May 2002. This item is not a news article, but the third in a special series of booklets in the ‘Our Queensland’ series, released as a supplement to the newspaper between 12 and 24 May 2002.

Nevertheless, his actual achievements and legacy seem incidental – something that is directly attributable to his lack of sophistication, foresight and vision. Indeed, his political life largely fits the acerbic, depressing, and only slightly exaggerated claim by Stephen Matchett that ‘the history of Australian politics is a dull and conventional tale of government by people self-disciplined to the point of political bondage and who were careful to never do much original thinking.’<sup>15</sup> This does not, however, mean that he was not a significant figure, although he is mostly remembered as a disruptor and spoiler rather than an achiever. His political conflicts and confrontations, far more than his policies, are remembered.

Gair’s cantankerousness, stubbornness and sheer lack of adaptability, it will be argued, were largely responsible for his conflicts with his parties. From his early days in parliament onwards, Gair continually demonstrated a lack of vision that did not improve after he became premier. Robert Murray summed him up as ‘tubby, wily, gutsy and genial but limited.’<sup>16</sup> An old sparring partner, world-rated economist Colin Clark, described Gair as ‘unintelligent’.<sup>17</sup> Although electorally popular, Gair was stubborn, a quality he often passed off – and not totally without reason - as political courage. His stubbornness was the principal reason for his becoming embroiled in a futile and largely avoidable political dispute that saw him squander the fruits of an impressive election victory, and suicidally cast himself into the political wilderness.

---

<sup>15</sup> Stephen Matchett, ‘Men Who Would Be Kings: Stephen Matchett Looks at Six Recent Biographies of Australian Politicians’, *Sydney Institute Quarterly* vol 6 no 1, March 2002.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Murray, ‘Looking Back on Evatt and the Split’, *Quadrant* October 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Royal Australian Institute of Public Administration. ‘Queensland Division Seminar: Queensland’s Administrative History. October 26<sup>th</sup> 1985: The Bureau of Industry in Queensland.’ [Address by Colin Clark.] Colin Clark Papers, Box 21A, Fryer Library, University of Queensland.

After some years in eclipse, he returned to the political scene, this time at the Federal level, heading the Democratic Labor Party in the Senate. Once more he was a person of great influence, who had had some luck (his power, literally, came from the drawing out of his name from a hat)<sup>18</sup>, but once more his lack of vision and stubbornness was in large part responsible for the increasing moribundity of his fledgling party, which went in less than a decade from wielding the balance of power to having no federal representation at all. And so it was that the political myopia of Vince Gair, twice in a lifetime, was the key to his largely squandering the advantages of positioning that he had attained, mostly through luck rather than his own actions.<sup>19</sup>

When Gair is remembered today, it is in the context of his perceived betrayals of the Labor parties of which, at the time, he constituted a vital part. His expulsion from two Labor parties was a unique distinction. Yet the two episodes for which Gair is so

---

<sup>18</sup> Political folklore sometimes holds that the DLP leadership was decided on the toss of a coin, but Senator McManus personally assured journalist Alan Ramsey that this was not so. They drew from a hat. Alan Ramsey, 'The Good Things in Senator Gair's Life', *Australian* 20 May 1968. See also Jack Kane, *Exploding the myths: the political memoirs of Jack Kane*, North Ryde, NSW: Angus and Robertson, 1989, p 218.

<sup>19</sup> My reference to Gair's political luck are based on the following grounds, fully elaborated in the thesis:

Gair became deputy premier after the shock defeat of E J Walsh in the 1947 state elections. Walsh returned to Parliament and Cabinet at the next election in 1950, but never tried to reclaim his former seniority and, surprisingly, not even running as a candidate for deputy premier when in 1952 he was eligible to do so. On 17 January 1954 *Truth* (Brisbane) described Walsh's decision not to stand as 'one of the greatest political mysteries of all time.' After Walsh's defeat, Gair won the deputy premier's position by one vote, after an exhaustive ballot. He then succeeded Ned Hanlon, who died in office after seven months of ill health. The deputy premier to Gair was the capable Jack Duggan who never challenged Gair in caucus. Duggan believed he had the numbers, but at almost a decade younger than Gair, he felt he had time on his side.

After becoming Senator, the numbers fell so that the DLP had the balance of power in the Senate for nine years, and at a House of Representatives level the DLP was able to wield the power of its preferencing to bring the Federal coalition government into line. Gair won the leadership of the Federal DLP by the drawing of his name from a hat instead of that of the schoolmasterly and straight-laced Frank McManus whose leadership style over the next nine years would have been vastly different to that of the boisterous Gair.

unfavourably remembered, the Queensland Labor schism 1955 - 1957<sup>20</sup> and the ‘Gair affair’ of 1974, occupied something less than two years of a political career that lasted twenty times that long. It could never be denied that both episodes were spectacular, and the effects of both, particularly the former, would resonate well beyond his lifetime.

Although Gair’s longterm influence on Labor policies was negligible, his negative impact on Labor politics in Queensland was cataclysmic. His myopia and recalcitrance contributed to the electoral banishment of his party for a generation. Without Gair, it is more than likely that Labor would have governed for much of the period between 1957 and 1989, which, under the conservative rule of Joh Bjelke-Petersen and others, was in state political terms an era of police corruption, unfettered development at the expense of the environment, and confrontation in the arena of civil rights.

But part of the pejorative and derisory way in which Gair has been remembered lies with the nature of Labor Party, at both state and Federal levels. Labor Party history, as Geoffrey Robinson has implied, is centred on how the ideological bases of labour politics are drawn upon while the party is in government: ‘The Labor Party was defined as an end in itself, entitled to loyalty regardless of the record of Labor governments.’

---

<sup>20</sup> While the Labor split in Queensland was a long time in the making, the most intense period was between November 1955 and April 1957. See Chapter 6.

People from within the party lavish their most fulsome praise on the ‘true believers’ and their most vitriolic excoriations on the so-called ‘rats’.<sup>21</sup> If ‘rat’ can be regarded as someone working contrary to the interests of the administrative wing of the party, then in the eyes of the parties involved, Gair, at the very least, appears to have qualified, as the parties involved expelled him. Indeed, as a rat, Gair was something special as Blazey and Campbell whimsically remarked:

*Gair is a rat of truly Churchillian proportions. Not only did he rat and then have the gall to successfully rerat, but in doing so he actually sank the ship he was swimming away from – an achievement unequalled in the annals of political rodentry.*<sup>22</sup>

But as Robinson also noted, drawing on the published works of La Nauze and others, the concept of the Labor ‘rat’ is an oversimplification, based on what La Nauze termed in 1960 an inappropriate imposition of moral standards on historical analysis. The perceived and mostly precipitate ideological switches of Billy Hughes, William Holman, William Lane, the Tasmanian John Earle and Joseph Lyons could all be explained as logical responses to changing times, and not simply by personal cantankerousness.<sup>23</sup> Conservative columnist P P McGuinness went even further with the cases of the perceived ‘rats’ in the Labor split of the 1950s. Pointing out that the DLP was formed in response to the forcing out or expulsion of anti- Communist Labor figures, precipitated by an erratic Labor leader, H V Evatt who was believed by some to be in an advanced stage of mental deterioration, McGuinness stated: ‘These were not rats but victims that fought back.’ Gair was included in McGuinness’s

---

<sup>21</sup> Geoffrey Robinson, ‘Biography and the Project of Labour History: Marxist Anticipations and Australian Examples’, *Eras: School of Historical Studies On-line Journal*, [Monash University] 2003. [http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/eras/edition\\_5/robinsonarticle.htm](http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/eras/edition_5/robinsonarticle.htm) Accessed 9 February 2004.

<sup>22</sup> Peter Blazey and Andrew Campbell, *The political dice men* Canberra: Outback Press, 1974, p 58.

<sup>23</sup> Geoffrey Robinson, ‘Biography and the Project of Labour History: Marxist Anticipations and Australian Examples’, op. cit.

categorisation of ‘principled men, to whom the Labor party owed a great deal, who refused to accept dictation from an undemocratic industrial wing.’<sup>24</sup>

After his 1957 expulsion, Gair would spend the rest of his life arguing that he was a good Labor man and that he never left the Labor party.<sup>25</sup> At least in his mind, this was true. Throughout his life, Gair was ideologically consistent, albeit from a very narrow base. Personally, Gair could be abrupt, rude, coarse, politically incorrect even by the standards of the time, and otherwise a difficult man with whom to get on, but to assign the blame for the Labor split in Queensland solely, or even primarily to his personality is greatly simplifying the case. Although many tried to argue otherwise, the casting out of Gair into the political wilderness was much more to do with the changes in the party which he had loved for so long, rather than burgeoning manifestations of treachery that had hitherto lain dormant in his breast. Gair simply did not have the sophistication or the vision to accommodate changes in outlook. In short, his gifts such as a capacity for organisation, hard work, attention to detail and a talent for getting himself into positions of political influence were squandered by his inability to adapt in the context of political change.

## **1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The first words in Graham Richardson’s entertaining and irreverent memoirs claim, with a certain amount of poetic and political licence: ‘No one writes books about the

---

<sup>24</sup> P P McGuinness, ‘Small cheese in the rodent realm’, *Australian* 1 July 2005.

<sup>25</sup> See for example *Telegraph* 22 June 1957. The *Courier-Mail* of 23 May 1957 quoted him as saying: ‘We are the Labor Party. The others are the splinter movement.’

Liberal Party ...In the conservative parties, colourful characters are rare indeed, and anyone possessed of a real personality obviously doesn't bother to join them.'<sup>26</sup>

Although Richardson was writing of the generation that came after Vince Gair, he hit home with his point that the historians, who usually come from the left of centre, are rarely troubled by desires to write books on the doings of those on the right of it. A very recent example is the contrast between the chief protagonists of the 2004 Federal election. The victor, John Howard, has been the subject of precisely one comprehensive biography, while the spectacularly self-detonating loser, Mark Latham, has been the subject of four after less than two years as the head of the Labor party.

Of the conservative Australian Prime Ministers in Gair's time, Menzies had to wait until 1999 for A W Martin's magisterial two volume set to be completed. There was no published biography of John McEwen until 1996, or of Harold Holt until 2005, and William McMahon does not appear to have been the subject of a published biography at all. John Gorton was only represented by Alan Reid's detailed but journalistic biography until Hancock's of 2003. But on the Labor side, there are four biographies of Evatt, one of Calwell (plus an autobiographical account), and several of Whitlam, not counting his own volumes of reminiscences.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Graham Richardson, *Whatever it takes*, Sydney: Bantam, 1994, p ix.

<sup>27</sup> David Barnett and Pru Goward, *John Howard: Prime Minister* Ringwood, Vic.: Viking, 1997.

The four Latham biographies are:- Craig McGregor, *Australian son: inside the mind of Mark Latham* North Melbourne, Vic.: Pluto Press, 2004; Michael Duffy, *Latham and Abbott* Milsons Point, NSW: Random House Australia, 2004; Bernard Lagan, *Inside a Labor tragedy* Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2005 and *Mark Latham: the circuitbreaker* Rowville, Vic.: Five Mile Press, 2004.

The magisterial two volume work on Menzies is Allan W Martin's *Robert Menzies: volume 1, 1894-1943, a life* and *Robert Menzies: volume 2, 1944-1978, a life*, published by Melbourne University Press in 1993 and 1999 respectively.



In 2005, journalist Stephen Matchett made the claim, perhaps tongue in cheek, that Tony Parkinson's recently published 'perceptive biography' of former Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett had 'achieved the near impossible in making interesting the story of a life spent in the parish-pump world of state politics.'<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, biographies of state premiers abound, and have proliferated in recent years. In his 1978 Clem Lack Oration to the Royal Historical Society of Queensland, Denis Murphy was able to claim that T J Ryan was the only premier adequately served by a full length biography.<sup>29</sup> Also in 1978, Murphy and his fellow editors Roger Joyce and Colin Hughes suggested that of the then living premiers or ex-premiers of Queensland, Vince Gair, Frank Nicklin and Joh Bjelke-Petersen qualified for full biographical studies of a kind contained in their volume, *Queensland political*

---

For John McEwen, see Peter Golding, *Black Jack McEwen: political gladiator*, Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 1996. For Holt, see Tom Frame, *The life and death of Harold Holt*, Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2005. For Gorton see Alan Reid, *The Gorton experiment*, Sydney: Shakespeare Head, 1971 and Ian Hancock, *John Grey Gorton: he did it his way*, Sydney: Hodder, 2002.

For Evatt, see Ken Buckley, Barbara Dale and Wayne Reynolds, *Doc Evatt: patron, internationalist, fighter and scholar*, Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1994: Peter Crockett, *Evatt, a life* Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993: Kylie Tennant, *Evatt: politics and justice*, Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1981 and Allan Dalziel, *Evatt the enigma*, [Melbourne]: Lansdowne, 1967.

Calwell's only biography is by Colm Kiernan, *Calwell: a personal and political biography*, West Melbourne, Vic.: Thomas Nelson (Australia), 1978. His autobiography, *Be just and fear not: the fearless memoirs of a great Labor leader* was first published by Lloyd O'Neil in 1972.

Biographical works on Gough Whitlam are: Graham Freudenberg, *A certain grandeur: Gough Whitlam in politics*, South Melbourne: Vic.: Sun, 1978: James Walter, *The leader: a political biography of Gough Whitlam*, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980: and Alan Reid, *The Whitlam venture*, Melbourne: Hill of Content, 1978.

<sup>28</sup> Stephen Matchett, 'Suburban Statesmen', *Weekend Australian* 2-3 April 2005.

<sup>29</sup> D J Murphy, 'The Premiers of Queensland', *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland* vol 10 no 3, 1977-78. The work referred to was his own biography of Ryan, *T J Ryan: a political biography* St Lucia, Q.: University of Queensland Press, 1975. At the time, biographies of Gair, Bjelke-Petersen, Theodore, Philp and Nelson were in existence, but for one reason or another all were seriously deficient.

portraits.<sup>30</sup> Nicklin, easily the least contentious of these three, remains unserved by a published biography<sup>31</sup>, but as early as 1978 there was a journalist's biography of Bjelke-Petersen, which subsequently went through several editions.<sup>32</sup> In 1983 a privately published but widely distributed and remaindered hagiography of Bjelke-Petersen appeared.<sup>33</sup> It was eventually followed by an eminently balanced academic study by Rae Wear that is likely to remain the definitive biography for some time. To the best of my knowledge, there are no plans for a further edition of this work, but Bjelke-Petersen's death in 2005 has removed any legal constraints that may have applied to Wear's biography.<sup>34</sup> Gordon Chalk, premier for one week in 1968, was not included in *The premiers of Queensland* for the obvious reason of his brief term in office, but was later the subject of a comprehensive biography that focussed on his service as an important minister for transport and treasurer.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Subsequent editions of this book were published in 1990 and 2003 under the title *The premiers of Queensland*. Both of these editions contained studies of Gair, Nicklin and Bjelke-Petersen. By this time, Gair and Nicklin had been dead for a decade or more (Nicklin died in 1978 and Gair in 1980), but Bjelke-Petersen did not die until 23 April 2005. While the preface of the 1978 incarnation of the book indicated the need for perspective, later editors apparently preferred currency: the 2003 edition not only included biographies of four then living ex-Premiers (Bjelke-Petersen, Mike Ahern, Rob Borbidge and Wayne Goss) but also a biography of the serving Premier, Peter Beattie.

<sup>31</sup> See, however, the following by the present writer: Brian Stevenson, 'The Political Career of Sir Francis Nicklin, 1932-1968', Bachelor of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1983; 'Frank Nicklin and the Coalition Government, 1957-1968', *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, August 1989; 'Nicklin, George Francis Reuben, 1895-1978', *Australian dictionary of biography* vol 15, and 'George Francis Reuben Nicklin: 'Honest Frank': The Gentleman Premier', in Denis Murphy, Roger Joyce, Margaret Cribb and Rae Wear, eds. *The premiers of Queensland*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, St Lucia Q: University of Queensland Press, 2003. .

<sup>32</sup> Hugh Lunn is the author of the following three books, all published by University of Queensland Press: *Joh: the life and political adventures of Johannes Bjelke-Petersen* (1978), *Johannes Bjelke-Petersen: a political biography* (1984) and *Joh: the life and political adventures of Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen* (1987). They are essentially the same book, with a few pages updating the eventful life of the subject in the latter two volumes.

<sup>33</sup> Derek Townsend, *Jigsaw: the biography of Johannes Bjelke-Petersen – statesman, not politician*, Brisbane: Sneyd and Morley, 1983. In 2001, I was able to obtain a copy of this biography, signed by the former Premier and his Senator wife for one dollar. The book contains interesting material on the family, and photographs that have not appeared elsewhere, but Townsend's unabashed admiration for his subject is only too obvious.

<sup>34</sup> Rae Wear, *Johannes Bjelke-Petersen: the Lord's Premier* St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 2002.

<sup>35</sup> Hazelhurst, Cameron. *Gordon Chalk: a political biography*. Toowoomba, Q: Darling Downs Institute Press, 1987.

Although the market would probably have been a ready one, Gair never wrote his memoirs, saying from time to time that he would do so when the defamation laws had been amended.<sup>36</sup> Despite his long period of public service, and the controversy which his career attracted, Gair has to date been the subject of only full biography, and that one, while well intentioned, is demonstrably unsatisfactory. Written by his onetime secretary Frank Mines, the work is brief, mostly superficial, poorly organized and overtly favourable to Gair. Its sole strength is that it draws upon interviews that Gair gave at various times, and Hansard speeches to tell the story in his own words, but those words are accepted far too uncritically: for example, Gair indicated to Mines, and later to Denis Murphy, that he did not meet B A Santamaria until some time after the 1957 Labor split, but Santamaria records in his memoirs that he had discussions with Gair in Melbourne shortly after the 1955 ALP Federal conference.<sup>37</sup> Mines wrote his book when his old boss was still alive, and it is likely that the work's lack of balance arises from Mines's commendable but obvious loyalty. The only review of the work that I have been able to find in a major journal commented that 'as much of the book consists of quotations from Gair's speeches and writings the implications of many of the arguments are one-sided.' The reviewer was Roger Joyce, author of a

---

<sup>36</sup> *Canberra Times* 3 April 1974.

<sup>37</sup> Frank Mines, *Gair*, Canberra: Arrow, 1975. Murphy described Mines's work as 'a poor, but short semi-autobiography'. D J Murphy, 'The Premiers of Queensland', *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland* vol 10, no 3, 1977-78, p 106. For Gair indicating to Murphy that he did not meet Santamaria until well after the split, see D J Murphy 'The 1957 Split: "A Drop in the Ocean in Political History"', in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and C A Hughes, eds. *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland, 1915-57*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980, p 494. Santamaria recorded that Gair saw him in Melbourne on the way back from the ALP Federal Conference in Hobart in March 1955. See B A Santamaria, *Against the tide* Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1981, p 189. In a taped interview with John Edwards, recorded in May 1972, Gair claimed, after some prompting from the interviewer, that he met Santamaria at an airport in 1954. (Vince Gair, 'Vincent Gair, Interviewed by John Edwards', 1 May 1972: ORAL TRC 168/5, National Library of Australia.)

comprehensive biography on Samuel Walker Griffith: Joyce said ‘I know that much more evidence is available than Mines has touched.’<sup>38</sup> Joyce was right.

Far superior to, but much briefer than Mines’s account is Brian Costar’s biographical study of Gair in the state arena, published in the 1990 and 2003 editions of *The premiers of Queensland*. But Costar’s account is confined to Gair as a Queensland premier and his subsequent career as a senator and the holder of the balance of power in the Senate is passed over rapidly. This period is, however, covered by Costar in the *Australian dictionary of biography*, but the entry is hampered by the well known editorial constraints of length that apply to that publication: less than 1 500 words are used to cover one of twentieth century Australia’s most turbulent political careers.

Gair was active in state and Federal politics from the early 1930s to the late 1970s and it is appropriate to examine and briefly comment upon works in which he receives a major mention.

The edited collection dealing with the Labor party and its governments in Queensland, *Labor in power* contains many mentions of Gair, chiefly in D J Murphy’s account of the 1957 Split,<sup>39</sup> which Costar called ‘the most satisfying account of the Split yet published.’<sup>40</sup> Most of the other mentions of Gair in this work are incidental. Costar contributed a chapter on the Split in Queensland to a 2005 collection of articles on the

---

<sup>38</sup> Roger Joyce, [Review of *Gair*, by Frank Mines], *Australian Journal of Politics and History* vol 23 no 1, 1977, p 131.

<sup>39</sup> D J Murphy, ‘The 1957 Split: “A Drop in the Ocean in Political History”’, in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and C A Hughes, eds. *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland, 1915-57*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980. This book contains other mentions of Gair, most of which are cited in this thesis.

<sup>40</sup> Brian Costar, ‘Vincent Clair Gair: Labor’s Loser’ in D J Murphy, Roger Joyce, Margaret Cribb and Rae Wear, eds. *The premiers of Queensland*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 2003, p 443.

Labor schism, but his emphasis was different to that of Murphy. Acknowledging that Murphy had already provided an exhaustive account of Queensland events, Costar's aim was, rather, to 'seek to explain why the politics of labour produced a serious party schism in April 1957 – a full two years after the Victorian calamity.'<sup>41</sup> There is yet another chapter on the Queensland split in Robert Murray's *The Split: Australian Labor in the fifties*, a comprehensive and even-handed account of what Murray termed 'the last major act of the Australian Labor drama of the mid-1950s.'<sup>42</sup> Even Gair, who presumably read this particular chapter very carefully, said in 1972 that Murray's account was 'as good a work as I've read on it', although adding that there were a few angles that Murray missed, that Gair, however, could not recall at the moment.<sup>43</sup>

Gair played a key role in three of the strikes outlined in another collection edited by Denis Murphy, *The big strikes: Queensland 1889-1965*. As minister for labour and industry he was a key player during the meat strike of 1946 and the railway strike of 1948. The shearers' strike of 1956 was a major signpost on the road to the Labor split of the next year.<sup>44</sup> Gair also features prominently in Douglas Blackmur's account of industrial relations during the period of the Hanlon government.<sup>45</sup>

A chronological account of the political milieu in which Gair operated is available in the 'Political Chronicle' a regular twice yearly feature in the *Australian Journal of*

---

<sup>41</sup> Brian Costar, '“For the Love of Christ, Mick, Don't Hit Him”: the Split in Queensland', in Brian Costar, Peter Love and Paul Strangio *The great Labor schism: a retrospective* Melbourne: Scribe, 2005.

<sup>42</sup> Robert Murray, *The Split: Australian Labor in the Fifties*, Cheshire, 1970.

<sup>43</sup> 'Vincent Gair, Interviewed by John Edwards', 1 May 1972: ORAL TRC 168/5, National Library of Australia. This declaration occurs on CD 1.

<sup>44</sup> Anne McMurchy, 'The Pastoral Strike, 1956': Douglas Blackmur, 'The Meat Industry Strike, 1946': and 'The Railway Strike, 1948', in D J Murphy, ed. *The big strikes: Queensland 1889-1965*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1983.

<sup>45</sup> Douglas Blackmur, *Strikes: causes conduct consequences*. Sydney: Federation Press, 1993.

*Politics and History*, which commenced publication in 1955, the year in which Gair's hold on the premiership started to become tenuous. The 'Political Chronicle', in general, provides a balanced viewpoint and is excellent for placing political developments in context.

Many unpublished university theses devote major mentions to Gair in their discussions of various aspects of developments in which he was closely involved. The theses by Droughton, McMurchy, Swan, Cribb and particularly Guyatt are valuable in this regard.<sup>46</sup> Reminiscences of unionists who opposed him also mention him, generally in not very kind terms.<sup>47</sup>

Gair's words, thoughts and deeds are widely covered in the press and the *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates* and the *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, better known as 'Hansard', for the almost half a century that elapsed between his earliest campaign in 1932 and his death in 1980. The period encompassed thirteen Australian Prime Ministers, nine Queensland premiers and a pageant of world history that roughly corresponded to the period between the first presidential campaign of Franklin Roosevelt and the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge to the murder of John Lennon and the release of fifty-two American hostages from Iran. Hansards, of

---

<sup>46</sup> Margaret N Bridson Cribb, 'Trade Union Militancy: Case Studies in Transport', Master of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1972; Margaret Jill Droughton, 'The University of Queensland Acts Amendment Act of 1957: A Case Study', Department of Government, Master of Public Administration Thesis, 1977; Joy Guyatt, 'Trade Unions and the Australian Labor Party in Queensland, 1947-1957', Master of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1971; Anne McMurchy, 'The Queensland Shearers Strike of 1956', Bachelor of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1977; Wayne Swan, 'Factionalism in the Case of Queensland Labor, 1959-1966', Bachelor of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1975.

<sup>47</sup> Archie A Dawson, *Points and politics: a history of the Electrical Trades Union in Queensland*. Brisbane: Colonial Press, 1977; Frank Nolan, *You pass this way only once: reflections of a trade union leader*. Brisbane, Colonial Press, 1974; Pete Thomas *The coalminers of Queensland: a narrative history of the Queensland Colliery Employees Union: Volume 1: Creating the traditions*. Ipswich: Queensland Colliery Employees Union, 1986.

course, provide much insight into his thoughts and opinions, albeit invariably from his viewpoint.

Newspapers have been used extensively here. The usual caution with the use of newspapers as sources applies, but the disadvantages of reading slanted editorials (that are readily apparent as such) are more than counterweighed by the advantages. Newspapers are a source of extensive direct quotes from participants in the events of the day. My extensive use of quotes is deliberate. Even if the speaker was not adhering strictly to the truth, or if, to paraphrase John Donne, his or her words were savoured more by the wisdom of the serpent than the innocence of the dove, there is still value for the historian in assessing the impression that the speaker was trying to give at a particular time. Gair and his friends, opponents, enemies and associates were given, and often took the opportunity to have their thoughts on a wide range of subjects entered into the public record. Even Gair's fondness for steak and kidney pie, his purchase of a defective loaf of bread, and his opinion of the Dick Tracy comic strip were taken down for posterity!<sup>48</sup>

Copious newspaper coverage is also useful in establishing chronologies. There were times in Gair's life when the political tectonic plates that influenced his actions were shifting, it seemed sometimes, by the hour: in chronicling these times, the press did

---

<sup>48</sup> For Gair's fondness for steak and kidney pie (with lemon meringue pie for dessert), see *Courier-Mail* 31 October 1952. For Gair's unfortunate experience with rapidly moldering bread, see *Courier-Mail* 30 December 1947. According to *Truth* 16 January 1949, Gair believed that the 'Dick Tracy' strip would prove more than amusing to those who read it. 'If it succeeds in starting a desire in the youth of the community to assist in the detection of crime rather than participate in it, it will have achieved a great deal.'

not fail. The period, moreover, produced many more than capable political journalists.<sup>49</sup>

Even the politicians – or, more than likely, their press secretaries – acted as columnists. The Brisbane afternoon paper, the *Telegraph* for many years ran a regular feature, ‘As I See It’ in which they were offered space to air their views. Gair as well as Jack Duggan and Frank Nicklin and others often took the opportunity to do so.<sup>50</sup> Sir Theodor Bray, long time editor of Brisbane’s main newspaper, the *Courier-Mail* had a lot of respect for Gair, to whom the newspaper was, most of the time, opposed editorially. ‘He took a lot of time to inform people in high places in newspapers of what he was going to do and how he was going to do it, and I think he had a real respect for the press, and that was reciprocated.’<sup>51</sup>

During most of the years under consideration here, the Brisbane *Courier-Mail* and its afternoon sibling, the *Telegraph*, were almost always sympathetic to the anti-Labor cause, although it supported Gair in the events surrounding the Labor split. The papers, however, rapidly dropped the news angle of Gair as a champion for democracy when it was realised that the conservative parties were in with a chance to govern Queensland for the first time in a generation. The press treated Gair ambivalently in his incarnation as leader of the parliamentary Queensland Labor Party and Democratic Labor Party, generally basing its stance on whether Gair’s actions were assisting the conservatives or not. As Gair’s powers and influence waned after about 1971, so to did the level of press interest and support. His acceptance of the

---

<sup>49</sup> Among the more capable journalists of the time, all of whom covered Gair, were Wallace Brown, Elgin Reid, Alan Reid, Logan Sligo and Clem Lack. (The Reids are not related.)

<sup>50</sup> See many citations to this column in the body of this thesis, and in the bibliography.

<sup>51</sup> TC Bray, Interview, National Library of Australia, 1:2/27.



ambassadorship in 1974 was considered as pathetically amusing at best and duplicitous at worst, and retrospective mentions of Gair, as noted above, have not been favourable.<sup>52</sup>

The Queensland AWU newspaper, the *Worker* (Brisbane) supported Gair almost unquestioningly until 1955, until the tide turned with the boycotting of the ALP conference in Hobart that year by Gair and others. Although the paper gave him strong, but qualified support in the election of 1956, there was rarely, if ever, an unqualified good word said of Gair in the *Worker* after the conservative federal government aided him in the pastoral strike of that year. Various Australian Labor Party newspapers, such as the *New Age* and *Labor News* were similarly venal.

By contrast, the Queensland Labor Party organ, the *Standard* (1957-1962) and the various publications emanating from the DLP were naturally always in favour of his doings and reported his thoughts and speeches complimentarily and faithfully. The National Civic Council was never formally associated with or affiliated to the DLP, but it did provide a good deal of the organisational backbone and many of its ideas. The National Civic Council's organ, *News Weekly* was to all intents and purposes the mouthpiece of the party for many years. It is to be wondered what the cultured, sanctimonious and didactic *eminence grise* of the National Civic Council, B A Santamaria made of the coarse, folksy and rollicking Gair, but the pro-Gair bias in *News Weekly* was palpable. The paper even suggested ingenuously that Gair, who had polled the most votes of the unsuccessful senatorial candidates, should be chosen to fill the place of a deceased Senator, rather than someone from the Senator's own

---

party.<sup>53</sup> For years, Gair's doings were covered in a way that was extremely sympathetic until his appointment as Ambassador to Ireland, and there are copious quotes from him in *News Weekly* that do not seem to have been reported elsewhere.

Dozens of major interviews and profiles were published over the years. The two key events in Gair's political life, the Labor party split in Queensland in 1957, and his appointment to the ambassadorship of Ireland in 1974 received saturation coverage, with the former the subject of an editorial in the London *Times*.<sup>54</sup>

Many works on the politics of the period mention Gair, although no Queensland premier between E G Theodore (who resigned in 1925) and Gordon Chalk (who became premier briefly in 1968) has a full scale academic biography devoted to him. Neither work gives special prominence to Gair.<sup>55</sup> Clem Lack's comprehensive account of Queensland politics between 1929 and 1960 devotes much space to Gair's actions and the Labor split, and provides a sympathetic character sketch of the fallen premier. Lack's generally thinly-veiled conservative bias is more obvious than most other sections of the book when he deals with Gair, who he describes as emerging from the Split 'with enhanced political stature and prestige as a man who preferred political extinction to the extinction of principle and conscience.'<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> *News Weekly* 12 September 1962.

<sup>54</sup> The bibliography of this thesis lists many major interviews and profiles.

<sup>55</sup> Ross Fitzgerald, *'Red Ted': the life of E G Theodore*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1994, and Cameron Hazlehurst, *Gordon Chalk: a political biography*. Toowoomba, Q: Darling Downs Institute Press, 1987. Naturally, there is no mention of Gair in the Theodore biography. Theodore retired from state politics in 1925, seven years before Gair entered parliament, but it is likely that the two men at least met. Theodore died in 1950. The Chalk biography mentions Gair incidentally for the most part, but devotes some space to the clash between the two over the Golden Casket Royal Commission, when Chalk had to withdraw his accusation that Gair had acted dishonestly.

<sup>56</sup> Clem Lack. *Three decades of Queensland political history 1929-1960*. Brisbane: Government Printer, [1962], p 628. On page 630 Lack perpetrates, and perhaps originates, the often repeated but erroneous statement that Gair was born in 1902 instead of 1901.

Gair receives many mentions in reminiscences of figures from other parties.<sup>57</sup> There are superb character sketches of him in the works by journalist Alan Reid<sup>58</sup> and there is a comprehensive, practically definitive account of the accession to the ambassadorship of Ireland in journalist Laurie Oakes's book on the 1974 election.<sup>59</sup> There is a brief, but extremely detailed and authoritative account of the question as to when Gair ceased to be a Senator and became an Ambassador in a composite work on the Whitlam government and the constitution.<sup>60</sup>

There are several works dealing with the DLP, including the reminiscences of key players, such as Senators Frank McManus and Jack Kane.<sup>61</sup> There are also several surveys of the party's complex relationship with 'The Movement' and the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. The DLP really had its heartland in Victoria, and Gair was the least ideological and most pragmatic of men. Even so, he is, surprisingly, only a marginal figure in these accounts, although they do shed much light on the milieu in which he operated.<sup>62</sup> Deserving to be considered apart from these is Paul Reynolds's early, brief but indispensable incisive and comprehensive survey of the DLP, which

---

<sup>57</sup> James Killen (Sir). *Killen: inside Australian politics*. North Ryde, NSW: Methuen Hayes, 1985; Fred Daly, *From Curtin to Kerr*. Melbourne: Sun, 1977; Peter Howson, *The Howson diaries: the life of politics*. Ringwood, Vic: Viking, 1984; Gough Whitlam, *The truth of the matter*. Ringwood, Vic: Penguin, 1979; Joh Bjelke-Petersen, *Don't you worry about that!: the Joh Bjelke-Petersen memoirs*. North Ryde, NSW: Collins/Angus and Robertson, 1990; James McClelland, *Stirring the possum – a political autobiography*. Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1989.

<sup>58</sup> Alan Reid, *The Gorton experiment*, Sydney: Shakespeare Head Press, 1971 and *The Whitlam venture*. Melbourne: Hill of Content, 1976.

<sup>59</sup> Laurie Oakes and David Solomon. *Grab for power: election 74*. Melbourne: Cheshire, 1974.

<sup>60</sup> P J Hanks, 'Parliamentarians and the Electorate', in Gareth Evans, ed. *Labor and the constitution 1972-1975: the Whitlam years in Australian government*. London: Heinemann, 1977.

<sup>61</sup> Frank McManus, *The tumult and the shouting*. Adelaide: Rigby, 1977; Jack Kane, *Exploding the myths: the political memoirs of Jack Kane*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1989.

<sup>62</sup> Tom Truman, *Catholic Action and politics*. Melbourne: Georgian House, 1959; Gerald Henderson, *Mr Santamaria and the bishops*. Sydney: Studies in the Christian Movement, 1993; Ross Fitzgerald, *The Pope's battalions: Santamaria, Catholics and the Labour split*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 2003; Gavan Duffy, *Demons and democrats: 1950s Labor at the crossroads*. North Melbourne, Vic: Freedom Pub Co, 2002; Bruce Duncan, *Crusade or conspiracy? Catholics and the anti- Communist struggle in Australia*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2001; B A Santamaria, *Against the tide*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1981; B A Santamaria, *Santamaria: a memoir*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1981; B A Santamaria, *Daniel Mannix: the quality of leadership*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1984.

contains valuable material and insights on Gair and is an extremely helpful reference work on the party's operations, parliamentary and otherwise.<sup>63</sup> The fact that it dated quickly – the DLP were wiped off the political map the year after the book was published – does not detract from its usefulness.

Before his death, one journalist noted that Gair had hoarded cartons filled with documents accumulated over his political life under his house.<sup>64</sup> Presumably these cartons formed the nucleus of Gair's papers, held at the National Library in Canberra. They are voluminous, comprising over 100 folders in fifteen boxes, plus voluminous cutting books on Gair's premiership. There is a subject guide, but the papers are not fully indexed, and, at times, not well sorted, with documents pertaining to events decades apart in the same folders.<sup>65</sup> There are comparatively few personal letters, but many of them are useful. Letters to and from Gair's friends and enemies in the party and the union movement are referred to in the main body of the thesis, but the less historically significant communications are not devoid of interest.<sup>66</sup>

The Gair papers contain verbatim transcripts of Gair's negotiations with his enemies in the AWU and the Trades and Labour Council, showing in excruciating detail the Byzantine nature of Labor party politics in the period leading up to the split. There is

---

<sup>63</sup> Paul Reynolds, *The Democratic Labor Party*. Brisbane: Jacaranda, 1973.

<sup>64</sup> Bruce Juddery, 'More than merely a titular head', *Canberra Times* 22 November 1972.

<sup>65</sup> This observation in no way detracts from the good works of the staff in the Manuscript Section of the National Library of Australia, who have long done a more than commendable job in making a diverse range of materials available in a convenient arrangement in as short a time as possible.

<sup>66</sup> Gair tactfully declined the offer of a businessman to have the features of the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh veneered into Queensland timbers for presentation to them during the forthcoming Royal Visit – 'they have become rather tired of seeing their pictures and portraits plastered over everything' – and opines that the Queen 'is a gracious young lady and certainly well informed on world affairs.' Gair to James F Brett, 23 June 1953, Gair Papers, Box 1 Folder 2, National Library of Australia. The Archbishop of Brisbane, James Duhig asked the Irish Ambassador to the Holy See to arrange a private audience with Pope Pius XII for the Gairs, 'both excellent Catholics.' 'This I am sure could be managed through His Excellency Monsignor Montini' (later Pope Paul VI.) Duhig to Irish Ambassador to the Holy See, 25 April 1953, Gair Papers, Box 1 Folder 6, National Library of Australia.

a wide range, covering all stages of Gair's career, of campaign material and transcripts of speeches and broadcasts reported either in summary or not at all in the press. Gair's period as minister and premier is covered by nine large volumes of newspaper cuttings that cover his transformation from competent, conscientious but little known ministerial novice to contentious premier. His later period is represented by hundreds of loose cuttings, some from newspapers that would not otherwise have been scanned for Gair information.<sup>67</sup>

The DLP papers and several other collections examined at the State Library of Victoria yielded very little on Gair not readily available elsewhere, beyond some news cuttings in obscure Victorian newspapers, a few angry internal memos on the occasion of his ambassadorship, and a surprisingly helpful account from the rarely interviewed Mrs Gair in the *Australian Woman's Day*, providing an alternative and happier perspective on that occasion.<sup>68</sup> Transcripts of extensive interviews carried out by Maurice French of the Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education (now University of Southern Queensland) with Jack Duggan, Gair's deputy and later bitter enemy, yield little on Gair that is new.<sup>69</sup> There are many interview transcripts in the National Library with mentions of Gair, including those of Queensland Liberal leader Sir Thomas Hiley, Victorian Premier Sir Henry Bolte, Federal Labor backbencher Brendan Hansen, newspaperman Sir Theodor Bray, President of the Senate Sir Kenneth Anderson, Senator Frank McManus and the DLP federal organiser and later

---

<sup>67</sup> When citing a newspaper article that I viewed in a cutting book or a loose clipping in the Gair papers, I have not identified these as such, as the overwhelming majority of newspaper articles can be consulted elsewhere. The only exception is where I have not been able to establish bibliographical details for the item, in which case its physical location is given.

<sup>68</sup> These items are cited in the body of the thesis, or in the bibliography. For the interview with Nell Gair, see Sandra Franks. 'Nell Gair keeps calm ... 'In 30 years we've never been out of the firing line' *Australian woman's day* 29 April 1974

<sup>69</sup> Dr French kindly made copies of the interviews for me. He later worked some of them into an article on Duggan: Maurice French, 'The Making of a Queensland Politician: Jack Duggan's Life Before Parliament, 1910-1935', *Journal of Australian Studies* no 69/ *Australian Cultural History* no 20, 2001.

Senator Jack Kane.<sup>70</sup> Federal Senators George Cole and Frank McManus also left their papers in the National Library: the latter was Gair's deputy for nine years.

Gair was not interviewed by the National Library, but there is a two hour audio interview by John Edwards, of the *Australian Financial Review* in the library. The interview was the basis of an article by Edwards in that periodical. There is no transcript, and when I visited the National Library in March 2006, the cassette tape was of such fragility that I could not have immediate access to the item. However, when the recording was transferred to compact disk, the quality was reasonable, and the voices of Gair and the interviewer could be heard clearly. Apart from a few minor sidelights (the death of a sibling from the effects of the 1893 flood), there is little in this interview that is not available elsewhere.<sup>71</sup> Gair was interviewed on the television programs *Today Tonight* and *Monday Conference*: these are cited in the bibliography.

Some general works devoted to much wider topics than Gair were useful. The second volume of Ross Fitzgerald's impassioned general history of Queensland has some material on Gair, albeit recycled, derivative, and leaning heavily on quotes.<sup>72</sup> Ross McMullin's history of the Labor Party masterfully condenses the 1957 split in Queensland into a few pages.<sup>73</sup> Mungo McCallum's satirical accounts of Gair late in

---

<sup>70</sup> These transcripts are fully cited in the Bibliography.

<sup>71</sup> Vincent Clair Gair, [Interview with Vincent Gair.] Interviewer: John Edwards, 1972. ORAL TRC 168-5. National Library of Australia: John Edwards, 'The Balance of Power Men', *Australian Financial Review* 6 July 1972.

<sup>72</sup> Ross Fitzgerald, *From 1915 to the early 1980s: a history of Queensland*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1985.

<sup>73</sup> Ross McMullin, *The light on the hill: the Australian Labor Party 1891-1991*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1991.

his career are cruelly amusing, but probably reasonably accurate depictions of how Gair appeared at the time.<sup>74</sup>

This work is a political biography. Biography, as a sub-discipline of history has obvious limitations. Every person is unique, ‘with a mental privacy no other human being can enter.’<sup>75</sup> Psychobiography, by which the motivations and behaviours of a subject is examined in psychological terms, has even more limitations. A psychobiographer needs to study the social and historical contexts in which an individual is found and understand what a normal reaction to challenges would be within those contexts. Only then can the psychobiographer avoid the pitfall of mistaking straightforward responses for individual personal dynamics.<sup>76</sup>

In an ideal world, a biographical subject would be treated to a rigorous and exacting psychoanalytic process in order to facilitate the biographer’s task by furnishing the writer with clues as to how and why they handled the life-changing challenges that they met. In practice, of course, a psychoanalyst attempting to write the biography of a dead person enters unfamiliar territory. ‘While he [sic] is used to dealing with a living, talking and responding subject, he now finds confronting him all the obscurities and opacities of the historical process.’<sup>77</sup> No less an authority than Freud sounded a note of caution as far back as 1930: ‘it is dangerous, not only with men, but

---

<sup>74</sup> Mungo MacCallum, *Mungo and the zoo plane: elections 1972-1977*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1979.

<sup>75</sup> A G Widgery, *The meanings in history*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1967, p 63.

<sup>76</sup> David Wrench, [Review of Alan C Elms, *Personality in politics*], *Journal of Personality Assessment* vol 41 no 1 1977.

<sup>77</sup> W W Meissner, ‘Psychoanalytic Hagiography: The Case of Ignatius of Loyola’, *Theological Studies*, v 52, 1991.

also with concepts, to tear them from the sphere in which they have originated and been evolved.’<sup>78</sup>

It is doubtful that Gair ever consulted a psychiatrist, or underwent any psychoanalysis, but had such an encounter taken place, the practitioner might well have noted several traits in his patient and his life history that were worthy of comment. It is interesting, and unusual for the time, that his political activism was originally inspired by his mother, rather than his father. His stubbornness, for which he paid a high political price, was unusually well developed. Denis Murphy, never an advocate of psychobiography<sup>79</sup>, and who would never have compartmentalised Gair or anyone else by diagnosing a martyr complex, nevertheless could not forebear to note that in the matter of the 1957 split, Gair ‘seemed to have invited the martyrdom that his supporters were to confer upon him.’<sup>80</sup>

G R Elton regarded biography as a poor way of writing history and argued that no individual had ever risen so far above other individuals ‘that it becomes sensible to write a history purely about him.’<sup>81</sup> Certainly Gair does not fit into that category, but a study of Gair and the turbulent times in which he lived and influenced, has some relevance and implications for the contemporary politics of Queensland, and Australia. In his time, Gair played a major part in the destruction of one political party

---

<sup>78</sup> Quoted in W W Meissner, ‘Psychoanalytic Hagiography: The Case of Ignatius of Loyola’, *Theological studies*, v 52, 1991.

<sup>79</sup> Brian Costar, ‘Denis Murphy: Labor Activist, Labor Historian’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, v 34 no 1, 1988.

<sup>80</sup> D J Murphy. ‘The 1957 Split: “A Drop in the Ocean in Political History”’, in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and C A Hughes, eds. *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland, 1915-57*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980. Murphy put down the grotesque events that culminated in Gair’s expulsion down to Gair’s procrastination and stubbornness, but in several instances, outlined in the chapter on the split, Gair compared his martyrdom and betrayal to that of Jesus.

<sup>81</sup> G R Elton. *The practice of history*. Sydney: University of Sydney Press, 1968, pp 134-135.



and helped to halt, for a generation, the political progress of the state branch of another. In doing so he wielded a power that was often far out of proportion to his talents and almost always out of proportion to his vision, but the environment in which he operated enabled him to do so. It is the aim of this thesis to show how this came about.

The structure of this thesis is largely conventional and chronological. Chapter One introduces Vince Gair and examines the literature that was mined for the thesis.

Chapter Two takes his life from birth (with a little backtracking to give due cognisance to his heritage and environment), through his early life, and the influences of locale, religion, education, socio-economic circumstances and parentage until his election to the Queensland parliament in 1932. The special circumstances surrounding Gair's 1932 campaign against a sitting but unpopular Attorney-General, Neil MacGroarty, are outlined.

Chapter Three deals with his career on the backbench up until 1942. His development as a local member, his struggle with the short-lived Protestant Labor Party, his concerns (as reflected in his parliamentary speeches) and his frustration as an ambitious, but continuously overlooked backbencher are all covered.

Chapter Four looks at his career as a minister until his accession to the premiership in 1952. His experiences as a mines minister dealing with the extraction and deployment of desperately needed resources at a time of war, and as minister for labour and

industry in the immediate postwar period, a time of great industrial unrest and bitter strikes are discussed.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven all cover the same period, Gair's premiership years between 1952 and 1957. It is the only instance where the chronological arrangement of this thesis is abandoned, for reasons outlined below.

Chapter Five covers the quieter aspects of Gair's years as premier, and his popularity with the mainstream electorate. It seemed prudent to separate the premiership years into two parts, not the least because the 'quieter' aspects of his time in government fell broadly into the first half of it. The 1954 Royal Visit, with which Gair managed to closely associate himself, attracted little, if any, disapproval. Even the restrictive laws on publication and censorship attracted little flak and Gair's enemies do not seem to have invoked them against him later on, perhaps because of the abundance of other grounds for criticism on which they could draw. His electoral popularity in this quiet period was never in doubt, and lasted at least until the election of May 1956.

Chapters Six and Seven cover well over a quarter of the thesis, and deal with the Labor split in Queensland. No apology needs to be made for the lengthy coverage of this, the central event in Vince Gair's political life. Moreover, with the likely exception of the election of the first long term Labor government in 1915, the Labor split of 1957 was the most significant event of twentieth century political history in Queensland.

Because of the importance of the split, I deemed it prudent to split the chapter into two parts. It could always be argued at what point the split was inevitable, but the 11 November 1955 decision of the Queensland Central Executive of the Labor party to direct the parliamentary wing of the party to introduce legislation for three weeks' leave was a significant milestone. After this point, a political Rubicon was crossed, for after this there was never a chance that settlement could be reached without either the organisational wing or the parliamentary party losing face.

Chapter Six, then, deals with the themes that led to the breach between the organisational and parliamentary wings of the Labor party in Queensland. The causes of political episodes of this magnitude can usually be traced back decades. Indeed, it would have been theoretically possible to trace the causes of the Labor split back to the precepts of democratic, representative government established by the ancient Greeks and refined by political philosophers during the Enlightenment, but a more practical starting point seemed to be the arrival of the Communist Party as a factor in Australian politics around 1920. The relationship to and/or infiltration of the ALP by the Communists and their adversaries, the Movement and the industrial groups and Gair's reaction to these incursions is covered, as well as the early stages of the three weeks' leave dispute. As previously mentioned, the story is taken to 11 November 1955, when the party organisation broke with tradition and directly ordered the parliamentary party to introduce legislation.

Chapter Seven, the longest chapter in the thesis, deals with the dispute between Gair and the party organisation between 11 November 1955 and his eventual expulsion on 24 April 1957, and takes the story to the electoral disaster of 3 August 1957, when

over forty years of almost interrupted Labor government ended in Queensland.

Motives, motivations and movements of Gair and other key players are examined in detail.

Chapter Eight deals with the period in Gair's political life between the end of his premiership on 3 August 1957 and the taking up of duties as a senator in Canberra on 1 July 1965. As leader of the breakaway Queensland Labor Party, which was neither in government nor opposition in the state house (until his defeat in 1960) and later as a party organiser and public servant his capacity to influence events was minimal, but he was able to execute that rare accomplishment in Australian politics – the successful comeback.

Chapter Nine deals with Gair's career as a Democratic Labor Party Senator, paying particular attention to his right-leaning thoughts on defence and foreign politics and his 'middle of the road' attitude to most domestic issues. His role as leader of the party that held the balance of power is discussed, and specific major instances of this are provided. The decline of his political influence and eventual replacement as DLP leader are also outlined.

Chapter Ten deals with Gair's near-tragic circumstances after his loss of the DLP leadership and examines his controversial appointment as Ambassador to Ireland. His career as an Ambassador, peremptory recall, return to Australia, last years and death are discussed. The thesis concludes with an assessment of Gair's role in Queensland and Australian political history.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THE EARLY YEARS, 1901-1932**

## 2.1 ORIGINS OF THE GAIR FAMILY

Vincent Clair Gair<sup>1</sup> was born in Rockhampton, Queensland on 25 February 1901.<sup>2</sup>

Gair was a member of the first generation of his family to be born in Australia.

The surname has several possible origins. In Gaelic, the very word 'gair' indicates noise and implies discord. In dictionaries but the word is variously defined as a verb - 'acclaim', 'exclaim' – and a noun – 'roar', 'outcry', 'shout' and 'din.'<sup>3</sup> It is also a placename, with several locations in Scotland, including a Gair Loch. The name, with variants such as Gayre, Gayer, Gaire and Gear is an ancient one and has several major family lines. The scion of one line of the family, Scottish-born Robert Gair, a Brooklyn paper manufacturer, provided a minor but pervasive benefit to humanity by inventing corrugated cardboard. He died a wealthy man in 1937.<sup>4</sup> The Gaelic origin of the word notwithstanding, one chronicler of the family, Victorian businessman R S Gair, believed that the name originated in Cornwall. The name occurred here in the fourteenth century. Branches became established in Devon, Yorkshire, Berkshire and from there to Ireland and Scotland.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Although Gair's middle name is far more frequently given as Clair, it appears on his birth record as Clare. Gair's biographer, Frank Mines, noted that the name 'Clare' was used on official documents pertaining to Gair until the late 1920s. Frank Mines, *Gair*, Canberra: Arrow, 1975, p 129. Clair is rarely used as a male name in Australia, but is reasonably common as such in the United States. Clare, however, is almost always feminine, but in its very rare male incarnation, the name is a diminutive of Clarence, which is Latin for 'one who lives near the river Clare.' No traceable relations to Gair of either sex bear the name, and Gair's mother was from Enniskillen, County Fermanagh, hundreds of miles from County Clare in Ireland.

<sup>2</sup> Gair's year of birth is frequently given as 1902, probably the perpetuation of an error in Clem Lack's standard history of Queensland politics between 1929 and 1960, which gives the date in the profile of Gair. (Clem Lack, *Three decades of Queensland political history, 1929-1960*: Brisbane: Government Printer, [1962], p 630.) However, the microfiche index to Queensland births gives the year as 1901.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.englishirisdictionary.com/dictionary> : <http://www.clanmcrae.org/documents/gaelic.htm>. Accessed 15 January 2007.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.forgotten-ny.com/forgotten14/forgot14.html>. Accessed 15 January 2007: *New York Times* 5 November 1937.

<sup>5</sup> *Wangaratta Despatch* 28 August 1959.

Gair himself believed that his line was the one associated with the town of Nigg, in Scotland's Ross-Cromarty Country. <sup>6</sup> The Gayres suddenly appeared in the region, 'a lowlying one, lying at the foot of the northern highlands, rich and prosperous, with ample mercantile trade' in 1649. According to the chronicler of the family, a marriage between Alexander Gayre and Catherine McCulloch brought the family into the area. As Catherine was the daughter of a prominent landowner, it was a fortunate marriage for Alexander.

Gair had politicians among his ancestors. One of Catherine's relatives, Thomas McCulloch, was Commissioner for Tain, Commissioner being a term used for men performing parliamentarian-like duties in Scotland before the 1707 union with England. It is also recorded, ironically, than another, Angus McCulloche, [sic] was 'soundly rated' [berated?] before an official of General Monk for not carrying out 'purges of Papists' with sufficient enthusiasm. At Cromarty in 1676 one Andrew Kaird, tinker, was charged with a string of offences, including the 'breaking of Thomas Gaire his booth and stealing merchant waires.' The luckless Kaird was 'brocht to the gallows at the Ness of Cromertie and hangit yron [thereon] by the neck to the death and his bodies cut down and intered at the gallows foot', indicating that the family was not one to trifle with. <sup>7</sup>

Other likely precursors of Vincent Gair had careers in politics that were distinguished by personal obduracy. Sir John Gayer, Lord Mayor of London during the English

---

<sup>6</sup> Age 11 April 1974, mentions the town of Nigg as being the ancestral home of the Gairs. There is a drawing of the coat of arms of the Gairs of Nigg in Gair's papers, held in the National Library of Australia, indicating the likelihood that Gair believed he had some connection with this line. Gair Papers, Series 6, Personal, Box 6, Folder 51, National Library of Australia.

<sup>7</sup> G R Gayre and R L Gair, *The book of Gayre, the Gayres of Gayre in Cornwall from the middle ages to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the Gayres of Knaresburgh, Berkshire, Ross Shire and Dunham*, Penzance, Cornwall: the authors, [1954], vol 3, pp 70-80.

Civil War was sent to the Tower in 1647 for allegedly abetting a tumult among city apprentices when an ordinance for compulsory militia service was passed. Gayer was brought before the House of Lords but refused to kneel at the bar as a 'delinquent' and was fined five hundred pounds for his offence. He was removed from office in 1649. His nephew, also Sir John Gayer, became governor of Bombay in 1692. He was incarcerated after allegations of bribery and remained in prison for ten years. Official evidence suggests that he might have been released much sooner had he not 'stood so much on the punctilios of release.'<sup>8</sup>

During the seventeenth century the name rapidly changed from Gayre to Gaire and from that to Gair, until nearly all descendants of the Nigg line of Gayres came to be known by the shortened version of the name. The family adopted a coat of arms, with a motto, *Sero sed serio* sometime in the late 1700s. As well as producing a premier of Queensland and Australian senator, the family had a distinguished twentieth century bearer of the name, Lt Colonel Sinclair Gair, CBE, who died in December 1939.<sup>9</sup>

Vince Gair's father, John Alexander Gair, was born in New Elgin, Moray County, Scotland, in 1861, the son of John and Jane (formerly Simpson) Gair. When his son visited John Gair's birthplace in 1953, he commented that he 'did not come here altogether ignorant of Elgin's beauty and resources, as my father was enthusiastic in his praise of his native country.'<sup>10</sup> At the age of twenty-four the younger John Gair, who listed his occupation as 'farm labourer' emigrated to Queensland on the *Bulimba*,

---

<sup>8</sup> *Dictionary of national biography*, London: Smith, Elder, 1885-1900, entries on both Sir John Gayers. For their connection with the Australian Gairs, see *Wangaratta Dispatch*, 28 August 1959.

<sup>9</sup> Gayre and Gair, *The book of Gayre*, vol 3, pp 70-80. *Sero sed serio* is Latin for 'late, but in earnest': it is also the motto of the Kerr family.

<sup>10</sup> *Northern Scot and Moray and Nairn Express*, 15 August 1953, press cutting in Gair Cutting Books, Gair Papers, National Library.



which left London on 9 September 1885 and arrived at Brisbane on 5 November of that year.<sup>11</sup>

Soon after his arrival in Australia, John Gair commenced the courtship of Catherine Mary Maguire, an Irish Catholic girl who was born near Enniskillen, County Fermanagh, Northern Ireland, probably in 1866, and had immigrated to Australia with her parents Owen and Mary (formerly Healy) as a child. The Maguires lived in the Ipswich and Goodna districts. Catherine became a nurse after leaving school.

By the much later account of his son Vince, the Protestant John Gair experienced some reluctance on the part of the local parish priest to accept the young man into the Catholic faith, especially as Gair had indicated that emotional rather than religious motivations had prompted his wish to embrace Catholicism. But Gair persisted, and he and Catherine were married on 5 July 1887, entering into a fruitful union, which produced at least ten children, nine of who survived childhood. Vincent Clair was the eighth or ninth in order of birth and the seventh to reach maturity.<sup>12</sup>

The Gairs lived in the Goodna district west of Brisbane during the first years of their marriage. John Gair's movements, as documented in the Queensland State Archives, are somewhat at variance with the details provided by Gair's biographer Mines, most likely because Mines was working with the recollections of Gair himself rather than

---

<sup>11</sup> Card Index to Migrants, Queensland State Archives. Frank Mines's biography erroneously lists John Gair's year of emigration as 1880.

<sup>12</sup> Frank Mines, *Gair*, Canberra: Arrow, 1975, p 1. This source says that the Gairs had eleven children, but only mentions the names of the nine that survived childhood. I have searched the indexes of Queensland births and only found ten, the nine listed in Mines and Owen Noonan Gair, who was born on 7 February 1893 and died on 6 May that year, possibly from privations suffered during the great flood of that year. (See below.) The other nine children, with their dates of birth, were John Thomas (5 June 1888), Annie Madaline (12 September 1889), Jane (22 June 1891), Augustine Francis (14 April 1895), Joseph Alexander (1 June 1897), Kathleen Mary (26 August 1899), Vincent Clare (25 February 1901), Leo Kenneth (30 June 1903) and Mary Agnes (14 January 1906.)

written sources.<sup>13</sup> Around the middle of 1892, John Gair was seeking employment in the prison services, furnishing copies of his testimonials (as an employee!) from the Lunatic Asylum in Glasgow to bolster his application, but there was no vacancy in the prison services at the time.<sup>14</sup>

Tragedy struck the Gair family when one of the Gair children, Owen Noonan, died on 6 May 1893 aged three months, possibly from the effects of the flood earlier that year. By Gair's account, mother and infant were rescued from the balcony of Goodna's flooded Railway Hotel, but the child suffered badly during the ordeal. Although Gair claimed that the episode made his mother insist on leaving the hotel to get away from memories of the tragedy,<sup>15</sup> John Gair was not issued with the license for the Railway Hotel until August 1894.<sup>16</sup> Whatever the case, he soon tired of the life of a publican, and exchanged it for that of a warder at the nearby Woogaroo asylum for the insane. He spent some time working at the Royal Brisbane Hospital as well, and earned 'very satisfactory testimonials' from both institutions. On 12 January 1896, according to one archival record, John Alexander Gair commenced employment as a warder at the Brisbane Gaol<sup>17</sup>, but, curiously, his staff record states that the date of his first appointment was 18 March 1897, and that he commenced work the prison island of St

---

<sup>13</sup> Frank Mines, *Gair*, p 1. This source has no mention of John Gair's employment at either the Royal Brisbane Hospital or St Helena.

<sup>14</sup> Queensland State Archives, A/4782. 'Home Secretary's Office Register for Applications for Situations in the Gaol Service, ca 1896-1899.' Despite the title the Queensland State Archives has given to the volume, John Gair's application can, by the dating of nearby entries in the ledger, be dated to mid 1892.

<sup>15</sup> Vincent Clair Gair, [Interview with Vincent Gair.] Interviewer: John Edwards, 1972. ORAL TRC 168-5. National Library of Australia. (This was transferred for me from cassette to compact disk in 2006: Gair's statement came from CD no 1.)

<sup>16</sup> *Queensland Post Office Directory 1894/5: Queensland Government Gazette 2 August 1894*, p 264.

<sup>17</sup> Queensland State Archives, A/4782. Home Secretary's Office. Register for Applications for Situations in the Gaol service, ca 1896-1899. It was recorded that John Alexander Gair was fit, 34 years old, 5 feet 8 and a half inches tall, and 12 stone (about 75 kilograms.) On 12 January 1896 he had been with the Brisbane Irish Volunteers for four years and was still a member. The official who hired him commented: 'This is a highly respectable man and [I] am confident he would make a good warder.'

Helena in Moreton Bay on 13 April 1897. In May 1898 he was transferred to Rockhampton Gaol, where his employment record was, for a time at least, less than distinguished.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, there can be little doubt that he encountered some difficulties in housing, feeding, clothing and educating his large family: many years later his son called for an increase in the wages of prison warders, who 'in their endeavours to discipline and reform prisoners, are in danger every day.'<sup>19</sup>

Shortly after the move to Rockhampton, John and Catherine Gair's most famous son was born at home at 103 North Street. The residence was 'a little house three doors from the old shop in North Street, between Murray and George on the left hand side going towards the hospital.' Gair had happy memories of this home.<sup>20</sup> The large

---

<sup>18</sup> Queensland State Archives, A/19923. Prison's Department Register of Officials and Warders ca 1865-1947. In his early days of employment, John Gair's 'prison record' was a spotty one. On four occasions in the second half of 1897 he was cautioned for miscounting prisoners, but between February 1904 and May 1907 he was involved in a series of serious offences and was lucky to retain his job. He was twice accused of tampering with the time clock 'with a sharp instrument', with the Superintendent on the first occasion regarding Gair's statements on the matter 'open to grave doubt.' On the second occasion, it was noted 'The circumstantial evidence points directly to Gair as the person who was guilty of tampering with the dial and no one else.'

In April 1907 the Visiting Justice held an enquiry into the possession of tobacco by prisoners, including one Henry Northmore, at the Gaol. The official comment was: 'Naturally one is reluctant to accept the statements made by prisoners against warders – but both Northmore and Guerin [the other prisoner] assert that Gair gave them tobacco on different occasions. Their statements were contradicted by the warder, but it is to be observed that Gair took no steps to charge Northmore formally with making false statements with regard to himself but contented himself with denying them after they had been made to the Superintendent. From Northmore's demeanour I am disposed to think there is some foundations for his statement that the warder has offered to give him tobacco, notwithstanding the warder's denial.'

Gair's worst ever official dereliction of duty came on 29 April 1907 when he was accused to allowing the prisoner Henry Northmore to escape. He was placed under suspension for three weeks, and on 18 May he was called upon to resign. The Acting Home Secretary, A A Barlow, further considered the matter, and Gair was allowed to keep his job, but had his salary reduced and was sent, temporarily, to Stewart Creek Gaol. He returned to Rockhampton Gaol the next year.

It seems that the John Gair learned from the experience, and for the last 18 years of his employment, he was cautioned only three times, and for trivial offences – once for being a quarter of an hour late in 1912, and for two miscounts of prisoners on separate occasions, ten weeks apart, in 1921. The first of these defaults, like the previous and more serious ones, was expunged in 1919 as a 'Peace concession.'

<sup>19</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 25 October 1934 p 987.

<sup>20</sup> *Telegraph* 5 June 1952.

family later moved to 53 Kent Street.<sup>21</sup> It was a parsimonious upbringing, with the parents carefully managing the budget so as not to go into debt. Years later, in the Senate, Gair would recall having ‘a Scottish father who, above all things, did not like to see a waste of money.’<sup>22</sup> Perhaps it is drawing a long bow to link childhood awareness of a cautious parental approach to finances with the fiscal conservatism and wariness of deficit budgeting exhibited by the later Queensland Labor governments, in which Gair served as minister, treasurer and premier.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, Gair recalled in 1960:

*[I]n those days we could have done with many things that we could not afford. For example, we could have done with an ice-chest when we were growing up but we could not afford one, so we did with a butter-cooler and a waterbag. In those days most people did that. We had kerosene lamps because we could not afford gas. We did not destroy the domestic budget or run into debt to have gas in the home before we could afford it.*<sup>24</sup>

## 2.2 THE EDUCATION OF YOUNG VINCENT

Vincent commenced his education at the Leichhardt Ward State School, also in North Street. This school had only been opened in December 1905.<sup>25</sup> Gair attended school here until 30 January 1911 when he was enrolled at the St Joseph’s Christian Brothers College in Rockhampton. It is more than likely that even at this tender age he was aware of sectarian differences. In 2007, a Leichhardt Ward pupil of the generation

---

<sup>21</sup> Mines, *Gair*, p 2.

<sup>22</sup> *CPD Senate*, 24 September 1968 p 892.

<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, Jack Duggan told the author in 1983 that the later Queensland Labor governments exhibited a ‘Depression ethos’ in terms of public spending, and Sir Thomas Hiley told the author in 1985 that Ted Walsh, Gair’s Treasurer, ‘worshipped reserves.’

<sup>24</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 23 October 1959 p 900.

<sup>25</sup> Frank Mines, *Gair*, p 1. *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton) 1 July 1980.

that followed Gair recalled: ‘We called the Roman Catholic sports boys “the Cattleticks.”’<sup>26</sup>

St Joseph’s was a small school. There are differing accounts of its actual numbers.<sup>27</sup>

Gair felt affectionately towards the Christian Brothers for the rest of his life. For a time he served as secretary of the school’s Old Boys’ Association.<sup>28</sup> As a minister, Gair was said to have chastised one of his own party, Fred Graham, in the House for urging the abolition of denominational schools – ‘If the honourable member for Mackay had had the privilege of attending such a school he would not have made such a stupid statement.’<sup>29</sup> Late in life, as Ambassador to Ireland, he paid affectionate tribute to former teachers Brothers Ryan and Hogan in a Dublin speech.<sup>30</sup>

Gair was, most likely, present when Governor Sir William MacGregor, accompanied by Archbishop Duhig, then Bishop of Rockhampton, visited the college in 1912 as part of the celebrations of the jubilee of the Roman Catholic Church in Rockhampton. The dignitaries were met by several boys in highland costume and later witnessed them dancing the highland fling.<sup>31</sup> In all probability it was just one of many times that he saw Duhig. As a small boy Gair assisted with his masses. Duhig once asked young Vince to go back to the Presbytery and retrieve his mitre. Eager to please, but

---

<sup>26</sup> Keith Wilson [letter to the editor], *Qweekend* 3-4 April 2007. (*Qweekend* is the magazine accompanying Saturday editions of the *Courier-Mail*.)

<sup>27</sup> Michael Talty, St Joseph’s Christian Brothers College, Rockhampton, to author 12 May 1984: *Pugh’s almanac* 1911, p 868 states that St Joseph’s had 140 pupils, but the *Australian Catholic Directory* for 1910 states that there were 230 boys at the school.

<sup>28</sup> Gair, Vincent Clair. [Interview with Vincent Gair.] Interviewer: John Edwards, 1972. ORAL TRC 168-5. National Library of Australia. CD no 1.

<sup>29</sup> *Courier-Mail* 30 September 1943. The comment was supposedly made in the Parliament on 28 September, but was not recorded in the debates.

<sup>30</sup> Donal J Tully, ‘Gair Does the Lair in Dublin’, *National Times* 27 September – 3 October 1976. The tributes to the Christian Brothers and Hogan and Ryan were sadly out of context, and contained in a 40 minute oration made in response to a question on what the Australian government was doing to save the kangaroo from extinction. Frank Mines also cited Brother O’Connell as, along with Brother Hogan, enjoying a lifelong friendship with Gair. (Frank Mines, *Gair* p 2)

<sup>31</sup> *Rockhampton Morning Bulletin* 1 October 1912.

unsure of what the item to be retrieved actually was, the lad was astute enough to guess what was required by the shape of the case in the Bishop's residence.<sup>32</sup>

Gair biographer Frank Mines reported that Gair was 'remembered as a bright student' during his years at St Joseph's, but detailed records of his academic career have not survived.<sup>33</sup> What is known is that Gair received an education centred on the acquisition of academic rather than technical skills<sup>34</sup>, and so came unknowingly to follow an educational and vocational pattern common to lower middle class Catholics of the period.

The order that operated Gair's school, the Christian Brothers was founded in Ireland in 1802. They saw education as a key part 'of a general thrust towards social alleviation and the remedying of handicaps under which the Irish poor suffered.'<sup>35</sup> Gair was taught by Christian Brothers who had taken vows of poverty, chastity, obedience, gratuitous instruction and perseverance. In 1968 historian Bede Nairn noted that 'the life of a Christian Brother is now, as ever, a thrusting and unremitting signal to the world that existence has a meaning and a purpose, that there is a God and His noblest creation is Man.'<sup>36</sup> From the first, the teaching imparted by the Christian Brothers had a practical commercial and mathematical bent, with literacy viewed as a

---

<sup>32</sup> Catholic Leader 24 March 1955.

<sup>33</sup> Mines, p 2: Talty to author.

<sup>34</sup> The academic emphasis on education that Gair received did not prevent him from cautioning in Parliament against the spending of too much money on intermediate, or high schools at the expense of technical schools. See *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 7 November 1934, p 1272.

<sup>35</sup> M E R MacGinley, 'Catholicism in Queensland 1910-1935: a Social History', Ph D Thesis, University of Queensland, 1982, p. 224.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in P C McCarthy, 'The Christian Brothers in Queensland 1875-1988', *Proceedings of the Brisbane Catholic Historical Society*, 1990.

basic social tool, not simply a skill used for recreation.<sup>37</sup> The practical style of education may have contributed to Gair's later low regard for academics.<sup>38</sup>

The Christian Brothers founded their first school in Queensland in 1875. By 1910, the year before Gair entered their Rockhampton institution, there were nine Christian Brothers schools in Queensland, and they were still the only teaching order in the state. By 1910 they had laid the foundations of their educational influence on Catholic life in Queensland.<sup>39</sup> In the years that Gair was a pupil, and for many, many years afterwards the Brothers maintained a high level of independence, not accepting government inspections, and producing their own texts, a situation that lasted till 1950.<sup>40</sup>

Some fifteen years after Gair's time at St Joseph's, another boy would receive an education at the hands of the Christian Brothers in faraway Victoria. Bartholomew Augustine Santamaria, whose life would intertwine subtly with that of Gair, and influence it in ways that are incalculable in both senses of the word, was fulsome in his praise of the Christian Brothers:

*They imparted a level of secular learning which on the record of public examinations was second to none...they opened the way to a somewhat better position in society to thousands of children of working-class families who otherwise would have had no alternative but to remain hewers of wood and drawers of water in the society into which they were born, on the bottom rung of the ladder.*<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> M E R MacGinley, 'Catholicism in Queensland 1910-1935: a Social History', Ph D Thesis, University of Queensland, 1982, p. 233; P F Connole, 'History of the Christian Brothers in Secondary Education in Queensland, 1875-1965', Master of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1965, p 84.

<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, the early Gair seems to have had some regard for academics. At the annual dinner of the University Men's Club, Gair said that the Labor party welcomed university students and graduates to its ranks: 'The university is the nursery of liberal thinkers, and the Labor Party is the spiritual home for men of liberal and progressive thought.' *Sunday Mail* 21 November 1943.

<sup>39</sup> M E R MacGinley, 'Catholicism in Queensland 1910-1935', p. 17.

<sup>40</sup> P F Connole, 'History of the Christian Brothers in Secondary Education', p 32.

<sup>41</sup> B A Santamaria, *Against the tide*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1981, p 8.

As a pupil educated at a Catholic school, Gair fitted the mould the Queensland education system provided for Catholic students. In the 1860s James Quinn, first Catholic bishop of Brisbane, instigated the adoption of state standards for all Queensland Catholic schools, after criticisms of the esoteric curriculum of the newly founded All Hallows school. Quinn believed that the two types of education were complementary: he was reported in the *Brisbane Courier* of 7 July 1875 as saying that 'Religious and secular education go hand-in-hand, this constituting a complete education.' The state system was changed in 1875, 1890, 1898 and 1905, and with each alteration a corresponding change to the Catholic curriculum was made.

In Queensland, Catholic secondary schools were established decades before the founding of the University of Queensland in 1909, but from 1879, Catholic scholars sat for examinations to enter universities at Sydney and Melbourne. Finances and the lack of a university in Queensland prevented many Catholics from taking full advantage of their academic education so many entered the public service after school.<sup>42</sup>

During the 1890s there was increasing pressure from the Catholic hierarchy to provide secondary education for Catholic schoolchildren, as a necessary component in raising the social status of the predominantly working class Catholics. It was believed that in the long term Catholic influence could permeate the prevailing social structure if enough Catholics occupied influential positions in government and industry. One especially desired objective was the obtaining of state aid for church schools, and to this end, educated Catholic schoolchildren were encouraged to aim for positions with

---

<sup>42</sup> Ronald Fogarty, *Catholic education in Australia, 1806-1950*, 2 vols. Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1959, vol 2, p 370.



the Department of Public Instruction.<sup>43</sup> A public service sinecure was highly prized, and many statistics, some of which would be used for sectarian purposes, confirm the extremely high rate of Catholic public servants in relation to the general population.<sup>44</sup> The Christian Brothers College at Rockhampton was no exception to this trend. The school was founded in 1894: the first student was presented for the Sydney public examination in 1896, and passed. Soon the familiar pattern of a small but constant group of boys sitting for the exams and securing positions in the public service was established.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, the disproportionate success of Catholic boys in 1916, the year after Gair left school, attracted some suspicion that was discussed in what Tom Boland, Duhig's biographer, described as 'lively, even libellous' terms.<sup>46</sup> Rumours would persist that the Christian Brothers' College at Rockhampton helped their pupils prepare for the examinations by using information leaked by Catholics in the public service and the department of public instruction.<sup>47</sup>

Vincent Gair was one of the hundreds of Catholics who opted for the security and hoped-for steady upward mobility offered by the state public service. Many years later he hinted that he would have liked something better, but did not elaborate further: 'Lots of boys, like myself, had ambitions when they left school, but did not

---

<sup>43</sup> Ross Fitzgerald, *From 1915 to the early 1980s: a history of Queensland*, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1984, pp 12-13. In 1910, F T Brentnall claimed in Parliament that 'at the present moment at least 50% of the teachers in our State schools are Roman Catholics.' (*Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 25 October 1910, p 1608.)

<sup>44</sup> Late in 1911 Premier Digby Denham ascertained from the Public Service Board that 56.1 percent of the successfully public service examinees from 1908 to 1911 were from Catholic schools. He denied that religion played a part in public service selection. 'I wish to say that the public service and its prizes are open to all; that no question of religious faith is ever raised; that no appointment or promotion is ever given or withheld because of an officer's creed; that as a simple matter of fact a very large number of Roman Catholics present themselves for, and pass, the examination; and that consequently a considerable number of entrants to the public service are Roman Catholics.' (*Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 21 December 1910, p 3108.)

<sup>45</sup> P F Connole, 'History of the Christian Brothers in Secondary Education in Queensland, 1875-1965', p 99.

<sup>46</sup> T P Boland, *James Duhig*, p 143.

<sup>47</sup> Barbara Webster, 'Fighting the Good Cause: A History of the Trade Union Movement in Rockhampton, 1907-1957', Ph D Thesis, Central Queensland University, Rockhampton, p 203.

have the [financial] means to achieve them.’<sup>48</sup> Gair left school at the end of 1915, and followed the example of his elder brother, Joseph, by joining the railways. (It is not known if he sat for the examinations in Sydney, however.) On 20 January 1916 he was appointed to the position of apprentice clerk at the Traffic Branch of the Railway Department at Rockhampton.<sup>49</sup>

### 2.3 PARENTAL INFLUENCE AND POLITICAL EXPERIENCES

At the time of his greatest political crisis, Gair thought back to the role that his parents had played in the formulation of his political awareness. Two weeks before he was cast out of the Australian Labor Party forever, Premier Vince Gair said: ‘I was cradled in the Labour movement, and have given the movement good service on the same lines as those who bred me.’<sup>50</sup> Three weeks after his expulsion, Gair was telling an election rally in Rockhampton: ‘My old parents walked the streets of this town on behalf of the Labor movement.’<sup>51</sup>

By the time he entered the workforce his mind had been exposed to politics through the influence of both his parents. ‘I was a youth with an awful lot of interest in politics and unionism, mainly inherited from and encouraged by my parents, and particularly by my mother, a great woman.’<sup>52</sup> Curiously, Gair told his biographer Mines that his

---

<sup>48</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 21 November 1951, p 1521. Gair was speaking during the *Assisted Students (Enforcement of Obligations) Bill* which compelled students who had had financial assistance from the Government in obtaining qualifications to ‘appreciate their moral and financial obligations to the State and fulfil the provisions of their contract.’ (p 1510.)

<sup>49</sup> Frank Mines, *Gair* p 3.

<sup>50</sup> *Courier-Mail* 9 April 1957.

<sup>51</sup> *Courier-Mail* 18 May 1957.

<sup>52</sup> *Truth* 20 November 1953.

father was ‘rather discreet in his politics’<sup>53</sup>, but when John Gair died in May 1942 a newspaper obituary described him as ‘a life-long supporter of the Labor party’ who had been a member of the South Brisbane branch since 1917.<sup>54</sup> Gair once described his father as ‘a strict disciplinarian.’<sup>55</sup> Later in life, Gair would remember his father’s homilies at appropriate occasions. He once recalled his father drawing the attention of his large family to a picture of a fish and saying to them: ‘Boys, remember that that fish would never have been caught had it not opened its big mouth.’<sup>56</sup> A quarter of a century after John Gair’s death, his Senator son would ruminate: ‘I had a Scottish father who taught me values.’<sup>57</sup> Even later in life, while ensconced as Australian Ambassador, he gave one example, reflective of the times, of these paternally transmitted ‘values’:

*My father always told me, ‘If you raise a hand to strike a man, be sure you hit him hard: otherwise don’t raise your hand at all, for he’ll certainly hit you hard if you don’t.’*<sup>58</sup>

According to her son, however, Catherine Gair was the dominant parent as far as political influence was concerned. When reminiscing about his mother, Gair asserted with pride ‘she was a great reformist [sic] in the matter of child welfare. A lot of the legislation which Labor had been responsible for undoubtedly had its origin in her campaigning.’<sup>59</sup> On another occasion he described her as ‘a genteel reformer [who]

---

<sup>53</sup> Mines, *Gair*, p 2. Gair’s father may have been a somewhat retiring personality, at least in comparison with his formidable mother. Sir Thomas Hiley, later a Liberal member of the Queensland parliament and a Gair adversary, grew up on the street corner opposite Gair in the Brisbane suburb of Dutton Park, and remembered Gair’s father as ‘a quiet, plodding warder at the Brisbane prison.’ Sir Thomas Hiley, [Interview] ORAL TRC 253. National Library of Australia, p 1:2/16.

<sup>54</sup> *Telegraph*, 1 June 1942.

<sup>55</sup> Vincent Clair Gair. [Interview with Vincent Gair.] Interviewer: John Edwards, 1972. ORAL TRC 168-5. National Library of Australia. CD no 1.

<sup>56</sup> *CPD Senate*, 27 March 1968 p 381.

<sup>57</sup> *CPD Senate*, 5 June 1968 p 1454.

<sup>58</sup> Donal J Tully, ‘Gair does the lair in Dublin’, *National Times* 27 September – 3 October 1974.

<sup>59</sup> *Sunday Sun* 12 September 1971.

doubtless played some part in the matter of reforms in maternity welfare and hospitals and so on.’<sup>60</sup>

Catherine Gair was a member of the Rockhampton branch of the Workers’ Political Organisation. Many years later her son Vince would proudly declare: ‘I belonged to the Workers’ Political Organisation long before I had a vote.’<sup>61</sup> WPOs were one of the many auxiliary groups formed in Queensland under the mantle of the Australian Labour Federation when the General Executive of that body recommended in January 1891 ‘that political associations in permanent connection with the ALF be formed ... for the purpose of educating the workers in the principles of the labour platform and the importance of placing their names on the electoral rolls.’<sup>62</sup> These workers’ political associations went under various names – Democratic League, Workers’ Political Reform Association, Workers’ Political Association and Workers’ Political Organisation were just some of the designations used<sup>63</sup> - until ‘Workers’ Political Organisation’ was adopted as the official uniform name for branches of the party at the 1907 Labor-in-politics convention.<sup>64</sup> An association known at first as the Workers’ Parliamentary Association was formed at Rockhampton in mid-1891.<sup>65</sup>

On occasion, the Rockhampton branch of the WPO leaned heavily on the services of its female members. Before the state election of 1912, the Labor executive in

---

<sup>60</sup> Peter Blazey and Andrew Campbell, *The political dice men* Canberra: Outback Press, 1974, p 59.

<sup>61</sup> CPD Senate, 6 October 1971 p 1200.

<sup>62</sup> W Joe Harris, *First steps: Queensland workers’ moves towards political expression, 1857-1893*, Canberra: Australian Society for the Study of Labor History, 1966, p 18.

<sup>63</sup> D J Murphy, ed. *Labor in politics: the state Labor parties in Australia, 1880-1920*, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1975, p 143.

<sup>64</sup> D J Murphy, ‘The Changing Structure of the Party’, in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and Colin A Hughes, eds. *Prelude to power: the rise of the Labour Party in Queensland 1885-1915*, Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1970, p 102.

<sup>65</sup> W Joe Harris, *First steps*, p 18.

Rockhampton suggested that all the canvassing for the Rockhampton and Fitzroy electorates be handed over to the women in the WPO.<sup>66</sup>

Even so, the surviving records of the Rockhampton branch indicate that Catherine Gair's role, however sincerely and enthusiastically she fulfilled it, was that of a rank and file member. It is recorded that she paid the usual subscription fees.<sup>67</sup> Mrs Gair provided assistance in the campaign to elect W G Higgs to the Federal seat of Capricornia in 1914<sup>68</sup> and donated the not inconsiderable sum of five shillings to the Combined Rockhampton, Fitzroy and Keppel Election Appeal in 1915, the year that the Labor party first won government at the polls in Queensland in their own right.<sup>69</sup> This donation (a generous one considering the size of her family) notwithstanding, there is no evidence that Catherine Gair ever held a prominent position, official or unofficial, elected or unelected within the local WPO. However, Gair claimed that the Queensland Labor premier, T J Ryan, once remarked to his mother Catherine: 'It is a very great pity that you were not born a man.'<sup>70</sup> It can never be verified that Ryan paid such a compliment to Catherine Gair, but it would seem that her son, in a burst of filial pride, greatly exaggerated the long-term social influence of his mother.

While Gair overstated his mother's influence on political events, there can be no doubting of the unusually strong political influence that she had on him. He told Frank Mines that she took an active interest in his career and he continued to seek her

---

<sup>66</sup> Queensland Labour Party. Political Labour Executive, Rockhampton. Minutes of meeting 23 March 1912. Rockhampton Labour Organisation Papers, Fryer Library, University of Queensland.

<sup>67</sup> Workers' Political Organisation, Rockhampton. [Financial records.] Cash Book, 1909, 1912, 1913. Rockhampton Labour Organisation Papers.

<sup>68</sup> A Smith, Secretary of Capricornia Divisional Executive, to W G Higgs, 17 September 1914. Rockhampton Labour Organisation Papers.

<sup>69</sup> Workers' Political Organisation, Rockhampton. [Financial records.] Cash Book, 1915. Rockhampton Labour Organisation Papers.

<sup>70</sup> *Telegraph* 26 January 1952. Ryan was a master at the Rockhampton Grammar School from 1900, and practiced as a barrister in Rockhampton in the first decade of the twentieth century.

advice on political matters up to her death on 11 January 1950, when he was minister for labour and industry and deputy premier.<sup>71</sup> A couple of years later he would declare: ‘God’s greatest creation is a good mother.’<sup>72</sup> Much later, he spoke to the condolence motion for the death of the mother of one of the other senators, but there can be little doubt that the sentiments expressed were inspired by the memory of Catherine Gair:

*No one else can give us the consolations and the comforts that a mother can. Irrespective of how old we might get and of how we might grow up, their interest in us never lessens. They feel that they are there to help us with direction, with advice and ... with criticism where they believe it is deserved and timely. We never repay them for all those things.*<sup>73</sup>

## **2.4 CATHOLICS AND THE LABOR PARTY**

The influence of the Rockhampton WPO, tied inextricably as it was to the fortunes of the Labor party, fluctuated wildly during the first years of the new century. With the level of political awareness prevailing in the Gair household, it can hardly be doubted that these developments formed a considerable proportion of the mealtime conversation.

Given that Gair came from a politically aware Catholic family, what was it that saw that family unhesitatingly support the Labor Party? In the 1890s Cardinal Moran of Sydney openly expressed his strong leanings toward the Labor party, not so much for its strong Catholic element, but because it was the party of those who earned wages.

---

<sup>71</sup> Mines, *Gair*, pp 2-3.

<sup>72</sup> *Courier-Mail* 31 March 1952.

<sup>73</sup> *CPD Senate*, 2 November 1971, p 1590.

<sup>74</sup> At the turn of the century, Labor and non-Labor alignments were not firm enough to be predictable, and conservative Catholic interests had fought against the drift of Irish Catholic loyalties to Labor. A number of Catholics had been prominent in the conservative ministries between 1890 and 1903: one, the ill-starred Thomas Byrnes, who died at 38 after five months as premier, was regarded as the epitome of a self-made Catholic. <sup>75</sup> But by about 1910, Australia-wide, the alliance between Catholics and the Labor Party was strengthening, although, as P J O'Farrell noted, 'none too quickly and not without much misgiving.' <sup>76</sup>

Church pronouncements on the brand of socialism that the Labor party practiced ruled in favour of Labor. In 1905 Cardinal Moran stated unambiguously that Labor was not socialist in any way that the church condemned. The bishops issued a Joint Pastoral in the same year that saw no evil in the socialism defined as the attempt to 'redress the wrongs and alleviate the miseries of the labouring poor.' <sup>77</sup> In Queensland, around 1910, the Catholic Church came to view Labor as the 'less sectarian' of the two major parties. Moreover, for most Catholics, support for Labor was an inevitable consequence of their socioeconomic situation. <sup>78</sup> The journalist Spencer Browne observed in his memoirs:

---

<sup>74</sup> Patrick P Ford, *Cardinal Moran and the ALP: a study in the encounter between Moran and socialism, 1890-1907, its effects upon the Australian Labor Party, the foundation of Catholic social thought and action in Australia*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1966.

<sup>75</sup> Rosemary Gill, 'Thomas Joseph Byrnes: The Man and The Legend', in Denis Murphy, Roger Joyce and Margaret Cribb, eds, *The premiers of Queensland*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1990, p. 179.

<sup>76</sup> Patrick O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and community in Australia*. West Melbourne, Vic: Thomas Nelson (Australia), 1977, p 289.

<sup>77</sup> Patrick O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and community in Australia*, p 291: 'The Bishops Define their Attitude to Socialism, 1905', in Patrick O'Farrell, *Documents in Australian Catholic history* vol 2, London: G Chapman, 1969, pp 161-164: A E Cahill, 'Catholicism and Socialism: the 1905 Controversy in Australia', *Journal of Religious History* vol 1 no 2, Dec 1960.

<sup>78</sup> D J Murphy, *T J Ryan: a political biography*, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1975, p 7.

*People say that so many of the Irish Catholics in Queensland are Labor men. That is because so many of them are manual workers. They go Labor because of its industrial bearing; not because they believe in its general policies.*<sup>79</sup>

There was also, as MacGinley has noted, a strong theoretical resemblance between the policies of the Labor party and Catholic social theory of the early twentieth century.

Both doctrines supported small proprietors, cooperative enterprises and social amelioration. MacGinley stresses, however, that there is no evidence that the pragmatic tactician T J Ryan was influenced by or even particularly aware of these theories.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, by 1910, three quarters of the Labor parliamentarians were Catholics.<sup>81</sup>

## **2.5 ROCKHAMPTON IN THE EARLY YEARS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY**

When he visited Queensland in the 1870s the English novelist Anthony Trollope called Rockhampton a ‘city of sin, sweat and sorrow.’<sup>82</sup> He noted (without acknowledging his source!) that people going from Rockhampton to Hell found it chilly compared to the place that they had left, but recorded that as the second city of Queensland ‘[it] thinks a good deal of itself.’<sup>83</sup>

In 1901, the year of Gair’s birth, it was, with a population of 17 000, the largest town in Queensland after Brisbane and Townsville. James Duhig, later Archbishop of

---

<sup>79</sup> Reginald Spencer Browne, *A journalist’s memories*, Brisbane: Read, 1927, p 132. Browne’s book was published in 1927, but this passage is contained in his pen portrait of Major W G Cahill, Commissioner of Police from 1905-1917.

<sup>80</sup> M E R MacGinley, ‘Catholicism in Queensland, 1910-1935: a Social History’, p 157.

<sup>81</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 1 November 1910, p 1761. The speaker was Andrew Thynne, a Catholic, but non-Labor Legislative Councillor, quoting Reverend G E Rowe.

<sup>82</sup> Liz Huf, Lorna McDonald and David Myers, eds. *Sin, sweat and sorrow: the making of Capricornia, Queensland 1840s-1940*, Rockhampton: Central Queensland University Press, 1993, p xi.

<sup>83</sup> Anthony Trollope, *Australia*, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1967, p 87.



Brisbane, took up residence in Rockhampton in the last weeks of 1905 and later recalled it as a pioneering frontier: 'What first and foremost impresses me about the past is the nearness and likeness of my early days as bishop to the first bishop of Brisbane, the intrepid Dr James O'Quinn.'<sup>84</sup>

A contemporary of Gair's who also grew up in Rockhampton, Frank Nolan, railway unionist, echoed Trollope when he remembered 'there was plenty of sin and sweat in 'Rocky', but little evidence of sorrow.' Nolan recorded his acute awareness of the social differences that emerged among the youngsters of Rockhampton at school, as working class families struggled to provide fees for textbooks and education.<sup>85</sup>

Thomas Hanger, who taught in Queensland schools for sixty years, confirms Nolan's contention that the social divisions of Rockhampton in the decade before Gair was born, were well defined:

*Very definitely, Rockhampton people in 1890 could be divided into two classes – the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' ... the latter made up of manual workers, labourers and navvies. I know of no place where the distinction was so marked ... the collarless crowd – the manual workers – often justified the contempt measured out to them; men sometimes spoke then of the dignity of labour, but dignity was notably absent ... School attendance was compulsory to the age of twelve, but the regulations were evaded without much difficulty.*<sup>86</sup>

There can be little doubt that as one of nine children, and a pupil at a private school, Gair was aware of economic and class differences. Nor did he forget them. Over sixty years later, he commented on how a Rockhampton contemporary who would become

---

<sup>84</sup> M E R MacGinley, 'Catholicism in Queensland, 1910-1935' p 21. James O'Quinn, who changed his name during his career, is the same individual as James Quinn mentioned earlier in the chapter.

<sup>85</sup> Frank Nolan, *You pass this way only once: reflections of a trade union leader*, ed D J Murphy, Stafford, Q: Colonial Press, 1974, p 14.

<sup>86</sup> Thomas Hanger, *Sixty years in Queensland schools*, Sydney: Wentworth, 1963, p 2.

the most implacable of his many, many political enemies, a tailor's son named Joe Bukowski, was sartorially superior to his contemporaries.<sup>87</sup>

Because of the policy of decentralisation followed by successive nineteenth century governments, Rockhampton, like the other coastal ports of Queensland, developed and benefited from the heavy government spending on the construction of roads, railways and port facilities needed for the exploitation of the pastoral and mineral wealth of the interior. This influenced the complexion of local politics in two ways.

Firstly, a high proportion of Rockhampton electors were blue collar workers connected with the transport industries that comprised the chief activity of the town. In normal circumstances, the votes of such electors could have been expected to strongly favour the infant Labor party. But this was offset by a second factor, the distance from the seat of government in Brisbane. This distance fostered a strong sense of regionalism, which in turn produced independent political sentiments.<sup>88</sup>

Thus the region was a natural one for the nurturing of Labor politicians, albeit those of an independent turn of mind. When Gair was very young, Rockhampton was represented, and Queensland was ruled, by such a man – William Kidston.

## 2.6 WILLIAM KIDSTON

---

<sup>87</sup> Anne McMurchy, 'The Queensland Shearer's Strike of 1956', Bachelor of Arts Honours Thesis, University of Queensland 1977, p 29.

<sup>88</sup> D J Murphy, *T J Ryan: a political biography*, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, p 15; D J Murphy, ed. *Labor in politics: the state Labor parties in Australia, 1880-1920*, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1975, p 130.

William Kidston was a Rockhampton bookseller and stationer who became treasurer of Queensland in 1903. Labor did not govern in its own right, but as part of a coalition with the Liberals, headed by Sir Arthur Morgan.

Kidston was a capable, ‘can-do’ politician who described himself as:

*The kind of Labor man who does not content himself talking about his loyalty to the platform, but who so manages matters that continue to place plank after plank of that platform on the statute book.*<sup>89</sup>

The Clerk of the Parliament, Bernays, remembered Kidston as ‘astute, hard [and] cold’.<sup>90</sup> When addressing a gathering, Kidston had ‘the ecclesiastical habit of quietly moving his arms outwards’<sup>91</sup>: this may have had something to do with the comment by Jim Larcombe, Labor member for Rockhampton after 1912 that ‘it was said in Rockhampton that people would read Kidston’s speeches but not listen to them.’<sup>92</sup> Strong-willed to the point of stubbornness, and beyond, he ‘allowed no man, and no body of men, to force their opinion on him’,<sup>93</sup> but ‘under the crust of sternness which thickened with years’ there was ‘a very kindly heart and keen sensibilities.’<sup>94</sup>

The ticklish task of maintaining the Labor-Liberal coalition was rendered immeasurably more difficult after the 1905 Labor-in-politics convention. The more militant sections of the party were in ascent, and the ‘socialist objective’, which involved ‘securing the full results of their industry to the wealth producers by the

---

<sup>89</sup> *Rockhampton Morning Bulletin* 11 February 1907.

<sup>90</sup> Charles Arrowsmith Bernays, *Queensland politics during sixty (1859-1919) years*. Brisbane: Government Printer, 1919, p 201.

<sup>91</sup> Andrew Lang Petrie, *Reminiscences of Mr A L Petrie for 33 years a member of the Legislative Assembly for Toombul and ‘Father’ of the Assembly*. Brisbane: Daily Mail, 1926, p 3.

<sup>92</sup> James Larcombe, *Notes on the political history of the labour movement in Queensland*. Brisbane: Worker, 1934, p 14.

<sup>93</sup> *Brisbane Courier* 27 October 1919.

<sup>94</sup> *Capricornian* 1 November 1919.

collective ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange' was adopted. The convention also adopted as policy 'the immediate stoppage of further sales of Crown lands', putting the kibosh on a scheme whereby Kidston, as Treasurer in the Labor-Liberal coalition headed by Sir Arthur Morgan, had created work for the unemployed in land clearing and used the proceeds from the subsequent sales to balance the state's finances.

Politically pragmatic, Kidston was unimpressed by impractical theories or high-sounding objectives, not to mention the impossibility of even attempting their implementation while the party was in coalition. He and the parliamentary leader of the Labor Party George Kerr, called for a new convention to reconsider the adoption of the socialist objective and the plank on Crown land sales, saying in a press statement:

*The introduction of such impracticable elements ... will infallibly drive away from the Party many of those who have been our earnest co-workers for years. It will also tend to prevent the Parliamentary Labour Party from co-operating with any other political party for purposes of progressive legislation.*

Kidston's call for a new convention was not taken up, evidence of his declining influence within his party. When Morgan was appointed President of the Legislative Council in 1906, Kidston succeeded him as premier. During the year he moved further away from the Labor Party and grew more accustomed to the idea of forming his own party, a combination of his supporters in the Labor Party and former Liberals. In February 1907, in Rockhampton, he confirmed his commitment to Labor's reforms, but insisted that both parliamentarians and candidates pledge themselves to him alone, and not to the party. Party operators, furious at his actions, prepared themselves thoroughly and expeditiously for the Labor-in-Politics convention, held the next

month. By a 36-6 majority, convention ruled that all Labor candidates were bound to the platform and that all other obligations were disavowed. All but fourteen Labor parliamentarians followed Kidston into his own party and for most of the next few years Kidston governed, firstly with the aid of the Labor Party and then, to the contempt of his erstwhile Labor colleagues, with the support of the conservatives led by Sir Robert Philp.<sup>95</sup>

Given the political activism, if not prominence of Catherine Gair, it can hardly be doubted that the local member Kidston's split with the Labor Party and his subsequent apostasies were subjects for discussion in the Gair household. Certainly it was a topic that occasioned much debate in the local WPO and in the electorates of Rockhampton, Mount Morgan and North Rockhampton where the endorsed Labor candidates lost their twenty pound deposits. The local WPO stood firm, however, in believing that the party was bigger than any individual. Kelly, WPO secretary, wrote to Lewis McDonald, secretary of the Central Party Executive<sup>96</sup>, asking for financial assistance and to pass on to the leader of the parliamentary Labor party, Dave Bowman, that 'he will have our loyal support in whatever decisions they arrive at when the party meets but we hope that the party will stick to their principle [sic] and not recognise any individual or one man [...] we will keep on battling here ...'<sup>97</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup> D J Murphy, 'William Kidston: A Tenacious Reformer', in D J Murphy, Roger Joyce, Margaret Crib and Rae Wear, eds. *The premiers of Queensland*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 2003.

<sup>96</sup> This body was known as the Queensland Central Executive after November 1918. See D J Murphy, 'The Changing Structure of the Party', p 107.

<sup>97</sup> H Kelly to Secretary, Central Party Executive, 20 or 21 May 1907. (Date altered in original.) Worker's Political Organisation, Rockhampton. [Letterbook.] 23 April 1907 – 4 April 1909. Rockhampton Labour Organisation Papers, Fryer Library.

The Kidston experience would resonate half a century later. The convention ruling binding all Labor candidates to the party platform and excluding all other obligations would, in time, impact greatly on the life of the six year old Vincent Gair. There would be parallels half a century later. Like Gair, Kidston was a more than capable, but headstrong and stubborn parliamentary leader who broke with his party on matters of policy and sought alliances with conservative rivals. Party loyalists would, in both 1907 and 1957, choose not to support their leader on the basis of personality. As would happen with Gair, Kidston's actions split the party, but in the earlier instance, electoral recovery was rapid, unlike the events of half a century later. After a poor showing in the election of 1909, Labor polled well, though not well enough, in 1912 and, with the gifted barrister and former Rockhampton schoolmaster, T J Ryan at the helm, won easily in 1915, only eight years after Kidston's defection.

When Kidston died in 1919, the *Brisbane Courier* recalled how he had 'allowed no man, and no body of men, to force their opinions on him.'<sup>98</sup> Forty years later, the young Vince Gair, already a Labor party member and a liver and breather of all things political, and as such, an almost certain reader of those words, would earn, the hard way, the same description.

## **2.7 GAIR'S EARLY RAILWAY CAREER**

1915, the year of the victory of the Labor party led by T J Ryan, was also the year in which Vince Gair finished school. On 20 January 1916 he joined the Railway Department Traffic Branch at Rockhampton. His elder brother Joseph Alexander had preceded him into the railways and was working as a lad porter. It was not a

---

<sup>98</sup>*Brisbane Courier* 27 October 1919.

prestigious or highly sought after post. Frank Nolan, later secretary of the QRU recalled that conditions for clerks were ‘unbelievably bad.’ The starting salary was £30 a year and if the employee stayed on for ten years, they could expect to be earning an annual salary of £110. Unless clerks were in the administrative section, where despite working Saturday mornings, the hours were reasonable enough, they were expected to work from 9 am to 7 pm or later with only one meal break. ‘No wonder there were few takers’, Nolan reminisced.<sup>99</sup>

The apprentice clerk designation was scrapped in mid-1917 when the first State award granted by the Queensland Court of Industrial Arbitration, established by legislation formulated by the Ryan Labor government, came into effect. Gair was redesignated a Junior Clerk. While his wages were still not spectacular, they had increased rapidly: by 1918, at 17, he was on £75 a year. He earned a small supplement to his income by learning telegraphy, and later shorthand and typing. By this time Gair had transferred to Brisbane, following his family down to the state capital after John Gair got a job at the Boggo Road Gaol.

By 1922 the 21-year-old Gair was earning £210 a year as an unclassified clerk, an amount then only slightly in excess of the basic wage for adult males. Not only was the salary meagre, the promotional prospects were extremely poor. Despite sixteen years in the railways, he remained an unclassified clerk until the day he entered Parliament in 1932. Gair believed that despite an unblemished record of which he was very proud, he might have had to serve another twenty years before receiving a classified position. Seniority in the department depended on age rather than years of

---

<sup>99</sup> Frank Nolan, *You pass this way only once*, p 15.

service, a convention, which galled the ambitious Gair, who like so many public servants before and since was torn between the need for job security and the desire to advance himself. (Although, in yet another manifestation of his perennial lack of vision, his desire for self-advancement was not strong enough to simply leave the department and seek employment elsewhere.) He was not even able to gain experience by moving around within the calcified administrative structure of the railways, and told Parliament in 1938: ‘As a clerk in the department I found it as difficult to obtain a transfer from one branch to another as it is to win a Golden Casket.’<sup>100</sup>

## 2.8 AN ACTIVE YOUNG MAN

Shortly after Vince started to work with the railways, his parents moved to Brisbane, residing at the inner southern suburb of Dutton Park. Gair joined the local Workers’ Political Organisation, campaigning as a lad for the Labor MLA Edgar Noah Free, who held the seat of South Brisbane from 1915 to 1920, and then acting as campaign director for Miles Ferricks, Free’s successor. Gair also directed Labor’s campaign in the South Brisbane municipal elections in April 1924. Labor won the South Brisbane municipality for the first time in history, but it was an empty victory. South Brisbane

---

<sup>100</sup> Mines, *Gair*, pp 3-4: CPD Senate 1965, p 855: *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 1938 pp 1296, 1305. I have traced Gair’s career as a railway employee in the *Queensland Government Gazette*. He first appears as an apprentice clerk on the list of the permanent employees in the Traffic Branch (Southern Division) on £54 a year in *Queensland Government Gazette*, 8 October 1917, page 1374. His brother Joseph is on the same listing, aged 20 and earning £78 a year. Gair is listed in the following issues of the *Queensland Government Gazette* with the following designations and earning the following annual wages:

4 November 1918, p 1265 – Junior Clerk, £75.

2 November 1920, p 1562 – Junior Clerk, (SE Division), £120.

8 October 1921, p 1091 – Junior Clerk, General Manager’s Office, SE Division, Brisbane, £170.

16 October 1922, p 1155 – Clerk, General Manager’s Office, SE Division, Brisbane, £210.

9 December 1924, p 2233 – Clerk, General Manager’s Office, SE Division, Brisbane, £230.

24 December 1926, p 2850 – Clerk, General Manager’s Office, SE Division, Brisbane, £270.

27 November 1928, p 1863 – Clerk, General Manager’s Office, SE Division, Brisbane, £295.

19 January 1931, p 437 – Clerk, General Manager’s Office, SE Division, Brisbane, £295.



was absorbed into Greater Brisbane and the local council abolished the next year. Gair was also active at branch administrative level, as secretary and from 1924 president of the South Brisbane branch, a post he retained even after entering Parliament in 1932.<sup>101</sup>

Like all the young men of his day, Gair participated in the compulsory military training scheme, introduced by the Fisher government to provide the young country with some form of civilian defence. Gair had mixed feelings about the experience. On one hand, he said: 'It did a lot for me. It brought me into the highest position in my native State.' On the other, he had some problems with the way in which the idea was implemented at the time:

*My objection to training in my day was that a trainee learned little ... Nothing distracts or frustrates young men more than being tied up with an outfit where they are not learning anything ... to call them to a parade on a Saturday afternoon and march them round 2 or 3 times, leaving them to sit down and engage in pebble throwing at one another, when they would rather be playing football or cricket, is not good enough.*<sup>102</sup>

As a young man, he was also active in debating, although when recalling this many years later, he did not specify the group or society within which his debating activities took place. He did, however, claim to have learnt the art of advancing arguments contrary to his own convictions – more useful to a politician, perhaps, than many let on - as part of the debating exercise.<sup>103</sup>

Despite his lack of inches and a tendency to chubbiness that showed even in the earliest photographs of Gair as a young man, he was a versatile sportsman. He played

---

<sup>101</sup> Mines, *Gair*, p 5-6.

<sup>102</sup> CPD Senate 6 October 1971 p 1200.

<sup>103</sup> CPD, Senate 13 September 1968, p 10.

tennis, had excelled both in cricket and football at school in Rockhampton and later shone as an all rounder on the cricket field, in both Rockhampton and Brisbane and as a member of both railway and parliamentary teams. He played at either halfback or five-eighth – traditional sinecures for players less tall – in Rugby teams, mainly playing for the Catholic-dominated Brothers teams. As a cricketer he impressed his former sporting associates who would remember: ‘He was a most tenacious player: he played as hard as he worked. He could always be relied upon to make runs, take a few wickets, and he was a smart fieldsman.’<sup>104</sup>

On 14 July 1924 Gair married Florence Glynn, sister of one of his co-workers in the railway department: unusually for the times, Florence, a clerk, was almost eight years older than he.<sup>105</sup> The marriage was brief and tragic. On 11 October 1929, Florence Gair died when she slipped and fell in a street wet from the afternoon’s rain, striking her forehead on the edge of the concrete gutter as she went down. At the time of Florence’s death, the Gairs had one daughter, Gloria Imalda. Gair went back to his parent’s home, just around the corner from his own residence in Dutton Park. His mother and sisters raised the girl. She too met a tragic end, dying during an epileptic seizure as a teenager on 29 September 1941.

The widowed parliamentarian remained a great believer in marriage. Even in a debate on the coal industry late in 1943, he somehow managed to insert the remark that ‘marriage cannot be advocated too strongly in Queensland or elsewhere.’<sup>106</sup> Conversely, he was extremely averse to divorce, which, along with immorality, he

---

<sup>104</sup> *Telegraph* 22 September 1956.

<sup>105</sup> Florence Glynn was born on 12 March 1893, daughter of James and Jane (formerly Ryan) Glynn.

<sup>106</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 26 October 1943, p 1159.

saw as ‘far greater evils than betting and drinking.’<sup>107</sup> After being a widower for fifteen years, Gair remarried in December 1944, to Nell Sexton, an Irish girl who was ‘born and bred on the land, on properties which grew sugar cane and bananas and the crops which thrived in the warm and lush Tweed River area of northern New South Wales.’ She later finished her education at Armidale and became a high school teacher.<sup>108</sup> The second Mrs Gair had at one time been a member of a religious order, and local scuttlebutt at the time claimed that because of this Archbishop Duhig had refused to officiate at the marriage, leaving the Reverend John O’Connell to perform the ceremony instead. Duhig wrote to Gair a few months after the wedding, saying that he was going through documents related to ‘dispensation’ in the matter, adding:

*I was much surprised at the reports that reached you with regard to my attitude towards your marriage. I understand that there has been some talk, but so far as the statement that ‘I had no intention [of] marrying you goes’ that is an absolute lie.*<sup>109</sup>

Gair continued working at the railway department for a couple of years after the death of his first wife. Seemingly trapped forever in a less than scintillating occupation and with a tragic bereavement to deal with, it could not have been a happy time for him. His party was at a low ebb as well. In May 1929 the fourteen year rule of Labor in Queensland had ended when the Country Progressive National Party (CPNP) of Arthur Moore won office from the unappealing and unpopular government of William

---

<sup>107</sup> *Courier-Mail* 15 May 1956.

<sup>108</sup> Sarah Franks, ‘Nell Gair Keeps Calm ... In 30 Years We’ve Never Been Out of the Firing Line’, *Woman’s Day* 29 April 1974. Nell Gair was born in Murwillumbah, New South Wales, in 1907, daughter of John and Bridget Sexton. Her name on her birth record is Ellen Mary Sexton.

<sup>109</sup> *Telegraph* 28 December 1944; Duhig to Gair, 7 March 1945, Gair Papers, Series 1, Correspondence, Box 2, Folder 15, National Library of Australia. The couple had two sons, Paul and Vincent Clement (Clem). Clem Gair studied veterinary science but became an accountant in the Nerang district, and died in the late 1990s. He kindly gave me permission to view his father’s papers (years before they came on open access) but politely declined by letter to be interviewed or questioned on the basis of ‘limited recollection.’ Paul Gair worked for some time as a teacher at his former school, St Laurence’s College, and for the National Civic Council in Western Australia, but was incapacitated by ill health in his forties. He died aged 59 on 5 May 2006. In the *Telegraph* of 18 August 1969 Gair claimed that his sons had no political aspirations, explaining ‘They’ve seen how rough and tough it is ... and how badly their old man was treated.’

McCormack. McCormack had alienated militant (and other) sections of his own party by the suppression of the 1927 South Johnstone railway strike, his opposition to union wage claims and his nearly total abandonment of the state enterprises introduced and nurtured by Labor premiers Ryan and Theodore. His passing from the political scene the year after his political defeat was unmentioned by most sections of his party.

The young Labor activist Vince Gair was outside the *Worker* building, Dunstan House in Elizabeth Street watching the figures go up as Labor candidate after Labor candidate fell to cheers from spectators. He would long remember the experience, little dreaming the circumstances in which he would describe the scene twenty-eight years later.<sup>110</sup>

## **2.9 THE MOORE GOVERNMENT AND MCGROARTY IN SOUTH BRISBANE**

In South Brisbane, the Country Progressive Nationalist Party candidate, barrister Neil McGroarty, defeated the sitting Labor member, Myles Ferricks. Because of his affiliation with the Irish Association, it was anticipated, correctly, that McGroarty would reap the benefits of the large Catholic vote in South Brisbane.<sup>111</sup> McGroarty went straight to Cabinet, but it is possible that the new premier, Arthur Moore, had ulterior motives in bestowing the honour. It was later claimed Moore deliberately selected McGroarty for Cabinet, along with a few other Nationals 'who, because of temperate or inexperience, would not present a united front against Country policy

---

<sup>110</sup> Clem Lack, *Three decades of Queensland political history*, p 476.

<sup>111</sup> Kett Kennedy, *The Mungana affair: state mining and political corruption in Queensland in the 1920s*, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1978, p 46.

where it conflicted with National policy.’<sup>112</sup> Moore appointed McGroarty as Attorney-General in the incoming government, one of the few times in Queensland political history where a Parliamentary newcomer went straight into the ministry.<sup>113</sup>

While not exactly welcoming him to office, the *Worker* allowed itself a little optimism when McGroarty was named Attorney-General. In an editorial on the incoming Moore Cabinet, the lead writer said:

*Absolutely nothing can be expected from Sizer, Peterson, or any of the new men, with the exception of Neil McGroarty, who can, at least, be relied upon to dispense even-handed justice according to his lights as Attorney-General.*  
<sup>114</sup>

The editorial writer was to be disappointed in McGroarty on several counts.

In Parliament, McGroarty used –many would say, misused - his post as chief law officer to pursue a political course of action in the Queensland courts. While serving as Attorney-General, he represented the Crown in the civil case resulting from the Mungana mining scandal, in which former premiers E G Theodore and W McCormack were accused of trafficking in mining shares issued by Mungana Mines Limited. Moore’s Cabinet was divided on whether to move against Theodore and McCormack, but McGroarty pressed hard for legal action to be taken. To this end,

---

<sup>112</sup> T P Fry, ‘State Elections – Queensland’, *Australian Quarterly*, June 1935, p 89. It needs to be mentioned that Fry’s father, J P Fry, was the member for Kurilpa. The elder Fry repeatedly clashed with McGroarty on the issue of the redistribution and other matters.

<sup>113</sup> Another incoming MLA, Ernest Atherton, member for Chillagoe, served as minister for mines for the whole of his parliamentary career. Like McGroarty, he was defeated in the 1932 elections and never returned. No other Queensland state parliamentarian besides these two has served their whole parliamentary career as a minister.

<sup>114</sup> *Worker* 22 May 1929. Jaundiced and slanted as the *Worker’s* view was, in retrospect it does seem to have some justification. Even the urbane Governor of Queensland, Leslie Wilson wrote to the Dominions Office on 5 June 1933: ‘The Moore government ... had a most inefficient collection of ministers.’ Brian Costar, ‘Labor, Politics and Unemployment: Queensland During the Great Depression’, Ph D Thesis, University of Queensland, 1981, p 72.

McGroarty, in his capacity as Attorney-General introduced legislation to the Parliament on 26 August 1930 amending the *Crown Remedies Act* of 1874 so as to institute civil proceedings. The amendment, proceeded with contrary to Crown legal opinion, made it possible for the government to use evidence disclosed at the Royal Commission in civil proceedings in order to prosecute the two men. The process violated the longstanding legal tradition that laws should not be changed retrospectively in order to victimise defendants. There was little doubt that the Moore government, at the exhortation of McGroarty, had moved the goalposts in order to undertake a prosecution that would otherwise have been impossible.<sup>115</sup>

When the two former Labor premiers were found not guilty (but had their reputations ruined, nevertheless) the failure of the prosecution discredited the Moore government. McGroarty's sharing in the £30 000 legal fees added further weight to the suggestion that Mungana was a political frameup. During the state elections a campaign pamphlet was produced in South Brisbane accusing McGroarty of being motivated by political malice and pointing out the huge legal fees he had accepted.

In Parliament, Labor members provoked the Attorney-General by taunting that he was a 'wood and water joey' and 'legal rouseabout.' McGroarty hit back by accusing Theodore and McCormack of cowardice for not appearing in the witness box, and retorting, somewhat insensitively considering that it was a time of acute unemployment and depression, that between the time he had become Attorney-General and the Mungana affair, he had taken less than £600 in legal fees. 'Compare that with the fees paid to the late T J Ryan, the Labor Attorney-General – the great

---

<sup>115</sup> Kett Kennedy, 'William McCormack: Forgotten Labour Leader', in D J Murphy, Roger Joyce, Margaret Cribb and Rae Wear, eds. *The premiers of Queensland*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 2003, p 182.

friend of the worker!’ He added fuel to the flame by boasting inaccurately, and without tact: ‘The Mungana case smashed the Labor Party in Australia almost beyond mending. Thousands of people throughout the Commonwealth consider I was worth what I was paid in that case.’ The Labor newspaper, the *Daily Standard* seized upon this comment as evidence that the Moore government had pursued a vendetta over Mungana.<sup>116</sup>

Even apart from Mungana, McGroarty had chilled the hearts of many workers with his attacks on arbitration. In September 1929, during the introduction of the *Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act* he promised to ‘ringbark’ the Arbitration Court at ‘an early opportunity.’ The Act abolished the Board of Trade and Arbitration and established in its place the Industrial Court consisting of a Supreme Court judge. Provisions dealing with the 44-hour week, the statutory 8-hour day and the basic wage were repealed. McGroarty said: ‘We consider that conciliation methods are the most hopeful, and that the assistance of the Arbitration Court should only be invoked as a last resort ...[Under the Moore government] there will be conciliation right up to the hilt, and the Arbitration Council will only be resorted to in the last analysis.’ Later in the same speech he ingenuously and explicitly managed to alienate a large part of his constituency: ‘I want to make it perfectly plain and clear that I do not and never will believe in preference to unionists.’<sup>117</sup>

---

<sup>116</sup> *Daily mail* 1 June 1932; *Daily Standard* 1 June 1932; Kett Kennedy, *The Mungana affair*, pp 46, 86-87, 109, 113; *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 6 November 1931, pp 1873 ff.

<sup>117</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 3 September 1929, pp 175-178; Clem Lack, *Three decades of Queensland political history, 1929-1960*, pp 93-94. Although the ringbarking comment would haunt McGroarty throughout the forthcoming campaign, the phrase did not originate with him, but was in response to an interjection from a Labor member, Hynes, who had asked the Attorney-General: ‘When are you going to ringbark the Arbitration Court?’

As if his involvement in the failed Mungana exercise and the changes to the industrial relations system was not enough political lead in his saddlebags to make McGroarty's re-election in South Brisbane problematical, the Moore Government in 1930 cut the wages and increased the hours of workers under state awards.

It was something to which, running for Parliament in 1929, McGroarty had promised never to be a party:

*The wages of the workers are low enough already, and I for one would never, from the humane standpoint alone, be a party to having them reduced. I say that Mr Moore is an honourable man, and one who has given his solemn undertaking that he will not cut wages. Personally I am bitterly opposed to any man's wages being cut down, because I fully realise that without the support of the workers I cannot hope to get into Parliament.*<sup>118</sup>

After a year in office, however, McGroarty was forced to sing a different tune:

*I said that I would not be a party to increasing hours or increasing wages. I said it definitely and I meant it; and I am manly enough now to say that I have changed my mind, and find that it is right and proper to reduce the wages, and in some respects increase the working hours at the present time.*<sup>119</sup>

His hapless leader Moore was less specific, but just as candid: 'I do not want to shelter behind anything or to say that I am not breaking promises. I recognise that we are breaking promises.'<sup>120</sup>

Because they were now obliged to work for lower rates, many workers who otherwise would not have been employed at all were able to retain their jobs, but their reduced

---

<sup>118</sup> *Worker* 8 June 1932 quoting *Daily Mail* 1 May 1929.

<sup>119</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 31 July 1930, p 326.

<sup>120</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 4 September 1930, p 793.



purchasing power did nothing to generate economic activity. Lower wages did not enhance Moore's popularity either. Partly because of Moore's actions and partly because Queensland's predominantly rural economy was less susceptible to recession than the more industrialised economies of the other states, Queensland's rate of unemployment was lower during the Depression than any other state. Unfortunately for the Moore government, unemployment peaked in February 1932, four months before the state election was held.<sup>121</sup>

## **2.10 CANDIDATE FOR SOUTH BRISBANE**

The reduction of his wages can only have added financial strictures to the other worries of the young widower Vince Gair, and doubtless were a big impetus to his seeking preselection for the 1932 election. There could also be little doubt that South Brisbane was winnable, with an aloof and somewhat acerbic Attorney-General in an unpopular government becoming increasingly out of touch with his predominantly working class constituency. Forty years later, one of his parliamentary colleagues, Hubert Sizer, told historian Kett Kennedy that McGroarty also lost touch with his fellow Catholics and was thus further disadvantaged against Gair, who represented all the virtues for the working-class Catholic voter.<sup>122</sup> There is an apocryphal story that Archbishop Duhig was so furious at McGroarty's discrimination against his fellow

---

<sup>121</sup> F T Grove, 'Queensland and the Moore Government', *Australian Quarterly* March 1932 : B J Costar 'The Great Depression – Was Queensland Different?', *Labour History* no 26, May 1974. On page 37 of his article, Costar states that unemployment in Queensland reached a peak of 32 953 in February 1932, but he does not give a percentage or a source for this figure. According to *Economic News* 9 June 1932, p 67, slightly over 30 percent of the Queensland workforce was unemployed.

<sup>122</sup> Kennedy, *The Mungana affair*, pp 114, 158. Kennedy interviewed Sizer in 1971.

Catholics that he instructed the local parish priest to liaise with the local ALP to find a Labor candidate who could unseat the unpopular Attorney-General.<sup>123</sup>

There were changes to the South Brisbane electorate between 1929 and 1932. The *Electoral Districts Act of 1931* reduced the number of seats in the Legislative Assembly from 72 to 62 and redistributed the boundaries. Of the ten seats that were abolished, Labor held eight.

The part of South Brisbane immediately across the river, strong in its support for the Labor party, was excised from McGroarty's seat, with the result that, as Gair claimed In 1947, 'the South Brisbane railway station, the South Brisbane post office and everything named 'South Brisbane' were taken out of that electorate and put in the Kurilpa electorate.' Middle-class suburbs such as Yeronga, Ekibin and Annerley, where the conservative vote was higher, were included in the new South Brisbane electorate. As Attorney-General, McGroarty was in charge of the Bill, and Gair had no doubt that he had acted to preserve his own political life at the expense of J P Fry, his colleague in Kurilpa, who, according to Gair, had no hesitation in accusing McGroarty of this at the time.<sup>124</sup> A few years later, Fry's son said of the redistribution that 'the interests of the Country-National Party as a whole were

---

<sup>123</sup> Brian Costar, 'Vincent Clair Gair: Labor's Loser', in D J Murphy, Roger Joyce, Margaret Cribb and Rae Wear, eds. *The premiers of Queensland* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 2003, p 269.

<sup>124</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 19 August 1947, p 82. In his maiden speech on 18 August 1932, Gair said: 'We remember the remarks of Mr Fry, the ex-member for Kurilpa, who accused the then Attorney-General, Mr McGroarty, of sacrificing him politically for the purpose of making his own political life secure in the electoral district of South Brisbane. We remember, too, how Mr Fry was determined to contest the South Brisbane electorate in spite of the fact that Mr McGroarty had received the party endorsement: but suddenly, and perhaps suspiciously, Mr Fry lost all his determination and calmly resolved to return to his Waterloo in Kurilpa.' *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 18 August 1932, p 47.

sacrificed in order to make the seats of the Country-National Ministers as safe as they could be made.’<sup>125</sup>

Although on paper the 1931 redistribution had made the seat harder for them, the Labor party had no trouble finding contenders to contest the plebiscite. Eight hopefuls put their names forward. Some were overoptimistic nonentities, but John Keogh, former mayor of South Brisbane, and Arthur Laurie, an alderman put their names forward. The plebiscite was held on 19 March 1932. In the first round, Keogh and Laurie ran third and fourth respectively. W D McArthur, a telegraphist, ran second with 45 votes but his tally was a little over half of the 83 recorded for Gair. When the final contest between Gair and McArthur was held, Gair was the winner by 103 votes to 56. The widowed railway clerk had precisely one month left to serve in his stultifying occupation and over forty-two years to serve in the stormy but stimulating calling of politics. He had won the first of many victories.<sup>126</sup>

Gair’s first victory was accompanied by controversy. The conservative *Daily Mail* reported on 8 April that the Yeronga branch of the ALP forwarded a protest to the party executive on McArthur’s behalf over the conduct of the plebiscite. At a branch meeting on 6 April party members signed declarations alleging impersonation, plural voting, inflated union lists, voting by unfinancial members and voting without party tickets. The branch resolved to demand that the QCE declare the plebiscite null and void and order that a fresh one be held.

---

<sup>125</sup> T P Fry, ‘State Elections – Queensland’, *Australian Quarterly* June 1935, p 86.

<sup>126</sup> *Worker* 23 March 1932. Brian Costar claimed, in error, that the future Communist leader Gerry Dawson was one of the plebiscite candidates. See Brian Costar, ‘Vincent Clair Gair: Labor’s Loser’, p 269.

The controversy was shortlived. On 18 April the *Worker* carried an unsigned letter hitting out at the leaker of the story.

*I am sure that it is with extreme regret that true Laborites became aware of one of their number falling so low as to divulge information, perhaps damaging, right into the enemy's camp. The whole episode points strongly to the final act of a distinct clique in a very determined effort to gain their objective by fair means or foul.*

Whoever the leaker was, it seems unlikely that it was the defeated McArthur, who was also secretary of the Yeronga branch. Although he presumably would have been pleased with the possibilities inherent in a fresh plebiscite, McArthur did his best to put out the political bushfire. He claimed that the identity of the leaker was 'well known at the South Brisbane committee meeting' and that the Yeronga branch was 'capable of controlling its own affairs and branch meetings and plebiscites have been conducted fairly and above board.'<sup>127</sup> No action was taken. A fresh plebiscite was not held.

## **2.11 RINGBARKING MCGROARTY**

Gair resigned from the railway department on 19 April 1932, later telling his biographer Frank Mines that, frustrated as he was by the lack of opportunity, he would have left in any case.<sup>128</sup> He made his first political speech as a candidate on 5 May 1932. The candidate 'proved a fluent speaker and the crowd listened attentively to every word he had to say in the cause of Labor.' Gair was confident from the start, amicably handling heckling from the third candidate for the seat, J M Clancy, who

---

<sup>127</sup> *Worker* 20 April 1932.

<sup>128</sup> Mines, *Gair*, p 7. Gair's assurances that he would have left his dull but secure job needs to be weighed against the probable difficulties in obtaining other employment so soon after the level of Queensland unemployment peaked.

had been endorsed by the conservative (and, it proved, short-lived) Queensland Party, which ran fifteen candidates, all unsuccessful, in its only campaign. He told listeners how some of the people in South Brisbane were living in 'half-tanks and humpies' because of the policies of the Moore government, and how Moore had criticised the laziness of some of those on unemployment relief, but Gair knew that some of them could not work any harder because they were underfed.<sup>129</sup>

Gair reiterated the theme of the Moore government's economic incompetence at subsequent campaign meetings. At a meeting at Fairfield he said while he did not blame Moore for the Depression, he certainly blamed him for aggravating the position because of the government's policy of deflation which not only hit workers, but business people as well. A glimmer of Gair's later fiscal conservatism emerged during the campaign. Moore had said Queensland was better off economically than any other state. Gair claimed that this was because previous Labor governments had conserved loan money. He also criticised Moore for lending money to other states.<sup>130</sup>

Electoral boundary changes were another campaign theme. Gair told one meeting that he would not make any accusations against McGroarty, but it would be shown that the Attorney-General was a bad judge of electorates. At that particular meeting, Dunn, the President of the South Brisbane Labor executive claimed that the seat should not be called South Brisbane, but Dutton Park or Annerley instead. Fry, the Nationalist member for the neighbouring electorate of Kurilpa held McGroarty responsible for

---

<sup>129</sup> *Daily Standard* 6 May 1932. On 2 May 1932 at Toowoomba, Moore had described some workers as 'parasites.' *Telegraph* (Brisbane) 3 May 1932.

<sup>130</sup> *Daily Standard*, 12 May 1932.

the changes which, because of the addition of the strong Labor district of South Brisbane, had rendered his seat almost unwinnable.<sup>131</sup>

Meanwhile, the hapless McGroarty, weighed down by harsh economic times, an unpopular government and his own tactless utterances, was experiencing a torrid campaign. At one stormy meeting at the Annerley Theatre, according to the *Daily Standard*, McGroarty was ‘hooted, howled down, counted out and continually interrupted as he attempted to speak in defence of the Moore government.’<sup>132</sup> After the campaign, one newspaper noted that the result in South Brisbane was:

*[M]ore or less overshadowed [sic] by the very troublous meetings which Mr McGroarty had in South Brisbane during his campaign. Despite the presence of large numbers of policemen, some of the meetings reached a state of pandemonium as dozens of the audience hurled question after question and indulged in hostile demonstration.*<sup>133</sup>

McGroarty’s younger opponent knew that the political tide was with him, as were the big guns of the Labor party in Queensland. On 27 May Opposition leader William Forgan Smith addressed a capacity crowd at the Princess Theatre in Woollongabba in support of Gair. On the same day, Gair told a crowd of supporters at Fairfield that he was sure he would ‘ringbark’ McGroarty as successfully as the Attorney-General had ‘ringbarked’ industrial arbitration.<sup>134</sup>

His prophecy proved accurate. On 11 June 1932 the Moore government was swept away at the polls after one ill-starred term. Labor picked up seven additional seats in Brisbane, including South Brisbane. Gair won easily, polling 52.21 percent of the

---

<sup>131</sup> *Daily Standard*, 28 May 1932.

<sup>132</sup> *Daily Standard* 4 May 1932.

<sup>133</sup> *Truth* (Brisbane) 12 June 1932.

<sup>134</sup> *Daily Standard*, 28 May 1932.

primary vote, and not needing the preferences of those who had voted for the Queensland Party candidate, Clancy, to win. As his biographer Mines noted, this was one of the few occasions that he did not receive the advantages that come with being the top name on the ballot paper.<sup>135</sup>

Outside the *Worker* building, Dunstan House, in Elizabeth Street, E J Riordan, member for Bowen, and who many years later, as member for Flinders would serve as minister for mines and immigration in Gair's cabinet, introduced Gair to the cheering crowd as 'the man who beat the ringbarker.' A quarter of a century into the future, Dunstan House would become a place of almost inconceivable political tragedy for Gair. But on this evening of 11 June 1932, it was a moment of triumph:

*My victory is at least a sign of disapproval of any interference with the Arbitration Court. It is also proof of what I said in my opening address in the campaign – that my opponent is a bad judge in picking seats.*

But even in his moment of victory, he was sounding a note of pragmatism, if not caution:

*Labor is assured of a working majority. As one of the new government members I would like to say that I hope the workers of Queensland will play the game with the new government. If they do, the new government will deal with the things that you have been forced to endure during the last few years. I know that you will play the game and so give Labor a decent opportunity to rehabilitate your working conditions. You must remember that we are taking office under very adverse conditions, and for that reason it is your duty to give the new Labor government an opportunity of doing something for you and for Queensland.*<sup>136</sup>

---

<sup>135</sup> Mines, *Gair*, pp 114-115.

<sup>136</sup> *Daily Standard* 13 June 1932.

### **CHAPTER THREE: THE BACKBENCH YEARS 1932-1942: ‘A YOUNG, VIGOROUS AND WIDE-EYED POLITICIAN’**

*Students of the city’s history know that for over 60 years South Brisbane had to play second fiddle to the Queen Street interests. They know that the Northside was developed, ever and always, at the expense of the Southside, which was allowed to stagnate as a still and unwanted backwater.*

*It took a young, vigorous and wide-eyed politician to get the Southside cracking.<sup>1</sup>*

---

<sup>1</sup> ‘The Story of One Man’s Work’, [election brochure], Gair Papers, Series 7 Box 7 Election Folder 60. National Library of Australia.



### 3.1 THE LOCAL MEMBER

Given the economic travails of the Moore government, the Labor victory in the State polls of 1932 was a lot narrower than what might have been expected. Labor won handsomely in its traditional areas of support in central and northern Queensland, but enhanced its position by winning seven additional seats in Brisbane. The 1931 redistribution availed the Moore government little: Labor won twelve of the nineteen metropolitan seats, but most of the margins were narrow ones, with Labor getting 89 104 votes in the 19 seats and non-Labor 83 026. <sup>2</sup>

The narrowness of his own margin in South Brisbane (he polled 52 percent in 1932) meant Gair had to tend assiduously to his constituency in his early years as its member. Although the very worst of the Depression was over for Queensland <sup>3</sup> Gair recalled forty years later how the plight of the unemployed was the main concern for himself and the other new members:

*We were just coming out of a depression. We were on 500 pounds a year, and it was a daily experience, after working in the morning and performing your ablutions, to find at least a dozen more people, like chooks on a roost, on your veranda waiting for an interview... after seeing Ministers at the Treasury Building the average metropolitan member would see up to a hundred people a day. All they were looking for was work and wages, which society was denying them. <sup>4</sup>*

Queensland took some years to emerge properly from the Depression, with thirty percent of workers unemployed as late as 1936. The report of the First Annual

---

<sup>2</sup> Brian Carroll, 'William Forgan Smith: Dictator or Democrat?', in Denis Murphy, et al, eds. *The premiers of Queensland* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 2003, p 216.

<sup>3</sup> Unemployment in Queensland peaked in February 1932. Brian Costar 'The Great Depression: Was Queensland different?', *Labour History* no 26 May 1974.

<sup>4</sup> John Edwards, 'The Balance of Power Men' *Australian Financial Review* 6 July 1972.

Conference of Unemployed and Relief Workers in December of that year, which argued that the government methods of collecting statistics artificially deflated the levels of actual unemployment, concluded: 'The Queensland workers remain little better off than at the commencement of the Depression' <sup>5</sup>

South Brisbane, with its heavy reliance on manufacturing industries, was hard hit. Many landlords preferred to keep non-paying tenants in their rental houses rather than evict them because of the risks of squatters who would strip the place of anything of value, such as brass and copper fittings. <sup>6</sup> The home of Gair's parents became an open house for the unemployed. It was not unusual for strangers to be wandering through the home, and on one occasion Gair's mother gave her son's suit to an unemployed man. <sup>7</sup> The charitable works of the young member would long be remembered.

During the November 1980 condolence motion in the Federal House of Representatives, the then leader of the Opposition Bill Hayden, whose parents lived in South Brisbane remembered Gair's constituency work: 'He discharged his responsibility with dedication, diligence and humanity ... the Labor movement is forever indebted to him for his work and his charity in those years.' <sup>8</sup>

Gair would make his mark as a local member in other ways. By 1960 buildings to the approximate capital value of £10 million had been added to South Brisbane's public architecture after Gair's twenty-eight years in Parliament. The Princess Alexandra Hospital was the showpiece, and a 1960 campaign brochure was fulsome in its praise for Gair's role in its establishment:

---

<sup>5</sup> Robyn Colwill, 'Unemployment in Queensland During the Depression, 1929-1939', *Queensland Historical Review* vol 6 no 1, 1977.

<sup>6</sup> C G Law, 'Sugar Bag Days: the 1930s Depression in Brisbane' in *Brisbane retrospect: eight aspects of Brisbane history*, Brisbane: Library Board of Queensland, 1978.

<sup>7</sup> Frank Mines, *Gair*, Canberra: Arrow, 1975, p 14.

<sup>8</sup> *Australian Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 25 November 1980 p 38.

*This remarkable institution ... represents a life's dream come true for Vince Gair. If South Brisbane had to thank him for nothing else than this 10-storey palace for the sick, it would need a lifetime in which to express such thanks adequately.*

During Gair's time he also saw the establishment of the Conservatorium of Music in the old South Brisbane Town Hall Building, the South Brisbane Dental Hospital and the South Brisbane Youth Centre.<sup>9</sup> His flaws in other spheres notwithstanding, South Brisbane would forever have good reason to be glad that Vince Gair was once its member.

### **3.2 A FATEFUL DECISION**

One of Gair's decisions in his early years would have far reaching implications for the next two generations of Queensland politics. Six of the ten members of the first Forgan Smith Cabinet were members of the Australian Workers' Union. For the next twenty-five years, the relationship between the AWU and the governing Labor party would be a vital ingredient in state politics. As Brian Costar has said, the direction taken by the Queensland economy under the guidance of the Labor governments of Forgan-Smith and his successors, confirmed and expanded the hegemony of the AWU. Had primary industries been displaced, or equalled in importance by an expanding secondary industrial sector it could have led to the development of manufacturing industry unions to rival the AWU on political and industrial fronts.<sup>10</sup> But after the Depression, Queensland opted to increase the quality and area of its agricultural base, with agriculture and the pastoral industries rather than trying to turn

---

<sup>9</sup> 'The Story of One Man's Work', [election brochure], Gair Papers, Series 7 Box 7 Elections Folder 60. National Library of Australia.

<sup>10</sup> B J Costar, 'Labor, Politics and Unemployment: Queensland During the Great Depression', Ph D Thesis, University of Queensland, 1981, p xvii.

itself into a predominantly manufacturing state,<sup>11</sup> and the AWU prospered in tandem with these developments. Both the AWU and the Parliamentary Labor Party benefited from the partnership, which was ‘firmly based on a mutual belief in the principle of moderate and gradual reformism and unswerving support for the arbitration system as the only proper instrument for resolving industrial conflict and achieving better conditions for the worker.’<sup>12</sup>

During Forgan Smith’s decade as premier, his close relationship with AWU secretary Clarrie Fallon provided the impetus for successive industrial reforms that would eventually move the AWU to proclaim in 1950 that Queensland workers were ‘...industrially and politically .. better organized and provided for than they are perhaps in any other country [sic] on earth.’<sup>13</sup>

However, Gair chose not to join the AWU, unlike many of his colleagues who held tickets. Nearly thirty years later Gair would recall in State Parliament that he was told very early he would have to join the powerful union to have a chance of becoming a Cabinet minister.<sup>14</sup> In an early indication of the contrariness that was to become one of his hallmarks, he chose instead to retain his membership of the Federated Clerks Union and ignored the advice. Gair’s decision to stay out of the AWU would have unimaginable consequences for Queensland political history.

---

<sup>11</sup> D J Murphy, ‘Agriculture: 1932 –1957’, in D J Murphy, et al, eds *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland 1915-57*, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 198, especially pp 192-194.

<sup>12</sup> Margaret Cribb, ‘Trade Union Militancy: Case Studies in Transport’, Master of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1972, p 226.

<sup>13</sup> Australian Worker’s Union. Queensland Branch. *The diamond jubilee of “The Worker”, Australia’s pioneer co-operative labour journal: souvenir number 1890-1950*. [Brisbane: no publisher, 1950?] p 38.

<sup>14</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 22 October 1959, p 846.

### 3.3. EARLY YEARS IN PARLIAMENT

At 12.34 pm on the afternoon of 18 August 1932 the member for South Brisbane rose in the Legislative Assembly to deliver his first speech. His very first words in the House were accusatory and combative, as he noted ‘the reluctance of hon[ourable] members opposite ...to contribute anything to the debate on this message of welcome and loyalty to His Excellency the Governor.’ He also mentioned the ‘indecent haste’ with which the governor had lately been appointed, and the expense of keeping Government House and having an overseas governor. Gair expressed the hope that in the not too distant future there would be no state governors and that the one governor for the Commonwealth would be sufficient. After this little aside, and formalities involving the Speaker, Gair used the occasion to recite the litany of ‘diabolical pledges and misstatements’ on the account of the hapless Moore government:

*The Moore administration has never been equalled in Queensland for incompetency, promise-breaking or reactionary legislation. The people of Queensland, in their wisdom, have succeeded in getting rid of this reactionary government, and have restored to power a humane government that will consider the interests of the people at all times.*

Gair told the house how both before and after his election he had met constituents ‘on the verge of starvation’, and that he had a medical certificate stating that a child had been admitted to the Brisbane General Hospital ‘solely because of under-nourishment.’ He accused the former Treasurer, Walter Barnes, of deliberately refusing to avail himself of any financial assistance offering, thus losing the opportunity to alleviate the distress. In violation of long-standing Westminster tradition, Barnes interrupted and asked Gair to withdraw the statement.

After the interruption, the new member continued, praising the performance of the new premier at the recent Premier's Conference – 'it was like sunshine let into a dark cell' - and noted the evils of the relief system, which obliged single unemployed men to assume a nomadic existence in order to qualify for rations. 'Instead of having to walk a long distance in an underfed condition, as they had to do prior to the change of government for a paltry six shillings worth of rations, they can today get their rations at the nearest police station.' He referred to the forthcoming *Development of Unproductive Lands Bill* which would encourage the cultivation of unused land in order to overcome unemployment, which he described as 'our greatest evil.'<sup>15</sup>

When he was not speaking in the House, Gair gained a reputation for the effective use of relief workers on public projects in his electorate. The relief work scheme was more highly developed in Queensland than in the other states, with one observer noting that Queensland provided the best example of intermittent or emergency relief in lieu of rations. In Brisbane, the number of relief workers was so great that the departments of railways and public works shared in the scheme. The scheme spread rapidly, with the 6 000 relief workers in Brisbane in October 1931 increasing to over 15 000 by June 1933. Their lot improved with the election of a Labor government. Award rates and margins for skill applied from August 1932, two months after the change of government.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 18 August 1932, pp 46-49.

<sup>16</sup> F A Bland, 'Unemployment relief in Australia', *International Labour Review* vol 30 no 1 July 1934.

A disproportionate amount of funds was expended on properties controlled by the Catholic Church <sup>17</sup>, more than likely a reflection of the religious composition of the government of the day. Sometimes the projects were considered to be on a scale larger than the normal ones on which relief workers were used. Relief workers excavated a playing field from a hillside at St Laurence's College, a school very close to Gair's home. When Forgan Smith saw it, he is reputed to have said: 'Good God, man, this is a Coordinator General of Public Works project.' Impressive as the project was in size, there was a problem with the drainage and for years afterwards students of the College would refer to it as 'Gair's Gully.'<sup>18</sup> Gair was energetic in obtaining relief work for other denominational schools, besides St Laurence's, and, oddly, was commended by the organization, the Knights of the Southern Cross for his work in connection with the Good Shepherd Convent in the northwest Brisbane suburb of Mitchelton, well out of his electorate. <sup>19</sup>

Although the veteran political commentator Clem Lack would comment in 1962 that Gair 'soon made his mark as a forthright debater' after his entry into Parliament <sup>20</sup> Gair's contributions to parliamentary debates during his decade as a backbencher were meager, at least in terms of volume. Frank Mines assiduously assembled statistics that show his contributions to be well below average in this regard between the years 1932 and 1940. In only one year, 1934, did he contribute over half the

---

<sup>17</sup> *Courier-Mail* 7 January 1937. Of the £112 769 expended from the Unemployment Relief Fund on properties controlled by religious denominations, the highest sum, £ 85 385 had gone to the Catholic Church, while the next largest sum, £ 13 693, had gone to the Church of England.

<sup>18</sup> Mines, *Gair*, p 15.

<sup>19</sup> Jack Woodward, *Knights of the Southern Cross: the Queensland story*, [Brisbane: Knights of the Southern Cross], 1984, p 49.

<sup>20</sup> Clem Lack, comp. *Three decades of Queensland political history 1929 –1960*, Brisbane, Government Printer [1962] p 630.

average number of columns for a member in each session of Parliament: in 1936 his contribution was less than one-twelfth of the average.<sup>21</sup>

Of course, the measurement of column inches is but an arbitrary indicator of the worth of a parliamentarian, and there is little doubt that Gair, even in these early days, made an impression on his colleagues. Some indication of their belief in his ability came with his election to the position of secretary to the ALP caucus in 1935. The *Brisbane Telegraph* noted that Gair had ‘achieved distinction by his appointment as secretary for he is a young member and has had only one term in the House. However, during this period he has created a very favourable impression.’ The next day the *Courier-Mail*, referring to ‘the youthful member for South Brisbane’ – Gair was thirty-four - noted ‘the emphatic selection, gaining an absolute majority over 3 opponents on the first ballot.’<sup>22</sup>

Despite this early honour, further accolades were slow in coming Gair’s way. It is possible that his demeanor during these early years diminished his chances for advancement in the folksy and gregarious world of Queensland Labor politics. While Lack in 1962 described him as ‘a good mixer and of amiable disposition’<sup>23</sup> the Gair of the 1930s was remembered, according to Frank Mines, as ‘melancholy, unsmiling and withdrawn, a man thought to be still mourning his wife.’ He seems to have had no part in the minor peccadilloes of the younger members – the practical jokes, the attempts to raise party funds through bingo and the bids to exert influence in the granting of licences.<sup>24</sup> Despite the mild belligerence in his first speech, the bulk of

---

<sup>21</sup> Frank Mines, *Gair* pp 16-17.

<sup>22</sup> *Telegraph* 20 May 1935; *Courier-Mail* 21 May 1935.

<sup>23</sup> Lack, *Three decades of Queensland political history* p 630.

<sup>24</sup> Frank Mines, *Gair* p 19.



Gair's backbench utterances show little evidence of the feisty combatant that later graced the floors of state and Federal houses for decades. One minor exception came in November 1934 during the Supply debates when Gair claimed that an Opposition member, Annand (East Toowoomba) had 'when he was an employer, sweated every employee in his employ: but that did not save him from bankruptcy.' Annand called Gair 'a damned liar'. Both men withdrew their comments and the incident was over in probably less than a minute.<sup>25</sup>

Gair may have been somewhat in awe of his more experienced colleagues in his early parliamentary days, and may have unwittingly shown it. Frank Waters, member for Kelvin Grove between 1932 and 1938, wrote (as secretary of the Queensland branch of the Amalgamated Postal Workers' Union) a vitriolic letter to Gair, reminding him in a most unsentimental manner of his (Gair's) demeanor during his backbench years:

*You are still, as you have been for the whole of your miserable political career, being laughed at for the manner in which you strut, mimic and fake the intonation and the gestures of men whom your poor mentality and inferior intellect debar you from equalling.*

*It is many years since your close associates discovered in you a childish tendency to copy such big figures as Stopford and Bedford, without being able to intelligently interpret their meaning. Your pantomimic capers have delivered you into the hands of the critics who fell with you (and they freely enjoy this at your expense) as well as those who threw you away.<sup>26</sup>*

The letter was from an authoritative source. No less wily an operator than Senator Graham Richardson described Waters as 'an astute judge of people and tactics', whose 'cerebral capacity was to brains was what Phar Lap's coronary equipment was

---

<sup>25</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 7 November 1934, p 1260.

<sup>26</sup> F J Waters to V C Gair, 15 October 1959. The letter is on Amalgamated Postal Workers' Union of Australia, Queensland Branch stationery. Copy originally from collection of material previously owned by Frank Waters, photocopy held by author. In the 1990 condolence motion for Frank Waters, Tom Burns referred to the letter, or perhaps one very like it, as 'a confidential letter, a very nasty letter, a very defamatory letter, yet it had the widest circulation of any confidential letter ever written.' *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 21 August 1990, p 2784.

to hearts.’<sup>27</sup> Richardson claimed that he never met anyone better read than Frank Waters, which in itself alone made an interesting contrast to Waters’s old colleague Gair.

Gair recalled in a 1972 interview that Forgan Smith said to him early on:

*There are two corridors out of this [Legislative] Assembly: the one on the right leads to the library and the other one leads through the dining room to the bar. If you take my advice you’ll take the corridor to the library and research what you say.*<sup>28</sup>

It has been noted that the anecdote had a certain air of improbability given the drinking habits of both men.<sup>29</sup> But Forgan Smith, as Brian Carroll has noted, read and researched widely in the realms of philosophy, the Bible and, even more practically, on parliamentary procedures and standing orders, and it was said that ‘in later years, almost anybody could induce him to read any book’. While there is ample anecdotal evidence on Forgan Smith’s enthusiastic drinking habits, there is also little doubt that Forgan Smith would have been fond of the Parliamentary Library.<sup>30</sup>

Despite Forgan Smith’s advice, it could not be said that Gair’s early parliamentary speeches showed evidence of wide reading or research, as opposed to reflections of and about personal experience. As Mines noted, the only author that he quoted in his backbench years was John Maynard Keynes. Even Keynes was quoted only twice, and that from the same newspaper article, a piece that appeared in the Melbourne

---

<sup>27</sup> Richardson, Graham, *Whatever it take*. Sydney: Bantam, 1994, p 6.

<sup>28</sup> John Edwards, *Australian Financial Review* 6 July 1972.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Blazey and Andrew Campbell, *The political dice men* Canberra: Outback Press, p 60. Brian Costar, ‘Vincent Clair Gair: Labors’ Loser’, in Denis Murphy, et al, eds, *The premiers of Queensland* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, p 269.

<sup>30</sup> Brian Carroll, ‘William Forgan Smith: Dictator or Democrat?’, in Denis Murphy, et al, eds, *The premiers of Queensland* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, pp 211-212.

*Herald* that argued against wage reduction as a means of balancing government budgets.<sup>31</sup>

Gair's enthusiasm for alcohol, especially in his later years, is well documented and he defended its consumption during the debate on the *Liquor Act Amendment Bill* in December 1941:

*The temperance case has been considerably discredited through the years by the intemperate attitude of some people associated with the temperance organization. These people will say that you and I, Mr Speaker, should not have a drink of beer or a nip of whisky after 8 o'clock at night, but the same people will take unto themselves the right to go into a refreshment-room or café and sit there ...gorging themselves, and thus indulge in intemperate eating or drinking.*

Waxing pontifical, he cited a theoretically and theologically unassailable authority to back up his view that the moderate consumption of alcohol was permissible in certain circumstances:

*After hearing all the arguments opposite, I, as a member of a Christian church, stop to think and wonder why our Lord and Master in his omnipotence, unlimited understanding, and knowledge should at the marriage feast of Cana in Galilee choose to change water into wine. If it is the curse and the evil that hon members opposite would have us believe it is, why did our Lord and Master see fit to give alcohol to the guests at that marriage feast so that they might be cheered and be happy on that auspicious occasion?*<sup>32</sup>

Gair's frequency of attendance at the member's bar during this time is undocumented, but it may have been that with time the effect of his personal tragedy started to diminish, and he became a more social figure than the morose widower that entered Parliament. The loss of his only child, Gloria Imalda, to epilepsy in 1941 would have

---

<sup>31</sup> Mines, *Gair* p 16. The *Herald* article was dated 25 May 1932. Its proximity in time to the 11 June Queensland state election suggests that it was part of Gair's research material for the campaign.

<sup>32</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 9 December 1941 p 1717.

been a fresh blow, but by 1942 the *Courier-Mail* political correspondent was at least able to report that Gair possessed ‘a genial personality [which] has earned him the regard of his fellow members.’<sup>33</sup>

One sign that Gair was making a good early impression came in 1936 when he first tried to enter the ministry. Jimmy Stopford, Secretary for Mines (who Frank Waters cited much later as one of Gair’s early role models) died on 30 November. Gair threw his hat into the ring despite far two more experienced contenders, Tom Foley (Normanby), in Parliament since 1919 and Jim Larcombe (Rockhampton), who first entered Parliament in 1912. Foley won the ballot on 17 December. It is likely, as has happened in such situations many times before and since, that caucus felt the youngest contender for the vacancy had time on his side and would get another chance at ministerial leather. In any case, it showed Gair had both self-confidence, and was well regarded by his caucus colleagues.

In Parliament, Gair concentrated very much on the issues affecting his electorate. His praise of the Mater Misericordiae Public Hospital and the Mater Misericordiae Children’s Public Hospital, situated in his South Brisbane electorate was a common theme. His call for more funding, and the length of the waiting time for outpatients at the Brisbane General Hospital have a contemporary ring.<sup>34</sup> The other institutions that he kept coming back to were the Diamantina Hospital for the Incurably Sick and the School for the Blind and Deaf, also in his electorate, although, oddly enough,

---

<sup>33</sup> *Courier-Mail* 10 September 1942.

<sup>34</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 7 October 1937 p 880.

considering his father's vocation, he only referred to the Brisbane Gaol at Dutton Park once in his first decade in Parliament.<sup>35</sup>

Much later, Gair told Anne McMurchy he did not have any great affection for the then minister for health and home affairs, Ned Hanlon (under whom he would serve as deputy premier and ultimately succeed)<sup>36</sup> but the senior minister seems to have shown an interest in him. He spoke on Gair's behalf in the opening meeting of his campaign, and took him along to visit hospitals in various parts of the state, including central and northwest Queensland. Gair's praise of his mentor, the architect of Queensland's unique free hospital scheme was at times effusive, but accurate given Hanlon's well attested to keen grasp of his portfolio:

*He has shown, by his keen industry and interest in all its branches, that he is fully competent to occupy this very important office. There is no phase of this department's activities that he has not made it his business to become closely acquainted with, and the practical knowledge he has obtained, I believe, has meant a considerable improvement for the persons who come under his charge.*<sup>37</sup>

Gair also showed a deep interest in the other institutions in his electorate. During his early years in Parliament he was sole parent of a sickly daughter, and there were occasional hints of the personal stress and anxiety. During the estimates for health he discussed 'the splendid work achieved by the baby clinics' and reminded members that a Labor government had put them in place. He continued:

*One of the major essentials in the rearing of an infant is that the mother should have the best possible advice and attention. The member for Aubigny*

---

<sup>35</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 25 October 1934, p 987.

<sup>36</sup> Anne McMurchy, 'The Shearer's Strike of 1956', in D J Murphy ed, *The big strikes: Queensland 1889-1965*, p 257.

<sup>37</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 6 October 1937 p 848.

*looks at me and smiles, but I can assure him that, as the father of one, I know the difficulties of rearing a child, particularly if that child does not happen to be healthy and robust.*<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps because of the less than perfect health of his own daughter, Gair took a deep and long-standing interest in the School for the Blind and Deaf at Dutton Park in his own electorate:

*Even the children who have been afflicted by blindness and deafness are not forsaken. Provision is made for them in a very excellent way by the school ... Children from all parts of Queensland are housed there, and receive the best of attention and a measure of education that would otherwise have been denied them.*<sup>39</sup>

Gair's personal interest in the school would continue for as long as he was the member for South Brisbane, and even as premier he made time to attend the parents' and citizens' meetings.<sup>40</sup> Even after that period, he was accused of unwarranted interference in its affairs.<sup>41</sup>

Another common theme in Gair's early parliamentary speeches was the human resource component of the railway department. There can be little doubt that there was more than a suggestion of bitter and unforgotten experience in his attacks on the wastage and inefficient usage of personnel in his old department. However, after sixteen years as a railway clerk, it was a subject on which he was well qualified to comment. He was very conscious of the need to develop the skills of the railway staff,

---

<sup>38</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 28 October 1932, p 1233.

<sup>39</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 28 October 1936 pp 1220-1221.

<sup>40</sup> The writer's late aunt, Mrs Thelma Berthelsen, had two children at the school in the 1950s and recalled Gair's regular attendance at meetings.

<sup>41</sup> Many years later, the Brisbane City Council alderman T J Doyle accused Gair of influencing the Nicklin government to dismiss three of the four people appointed by the former Labor government on the school committee. Doyle and W R Coutts, former Federal Labor member for Griffith were among the three: P D Connolly, Liberal member for Kurilpa in the Legislative Assembly and Arthur A Chesby, the Liberal member for the Federal seat of Griffith were among the new appointees. *Courier-Mail* 12 March 1959.

and advocated 'a system of interchange of railway clerks, particularly the younger men, between the goods, parcels, and administrative offices, thus giving them a general knowledge of railway work, and qualifying them to take advantages of vacancies as they occurred'. The policy of keeping young men at the same work for as long as ten years was 'wrong from both the individual and economic point of view. It discourages young men and destroys their incentive by robbing their work of interest, so that, instead of being active, they become slack'.<sup>42</sup>

In Gair's view:

*[T]he employment of these young men in attaching papers to files and answering the telephones and doing a bit of typing after many years after they are admitted to the service cannot be justified. If they were given additional responsibilities for each year of service it would give them a greater interest in their work ... they would be more efficient officers and... of great economic value to the state.*<sup>43</sup>

No one doubted Gair's experience on railway matters, but one newspaper writer noted that his grasp of the subject was accompanied by a certain ponderousness in the delivery.

During the 1938 discussion of railway estimates, it was recorded that:

*The bright young man from South Brisbane, weighty and impressive as a gouty English squire full of years and port, discussed railway problems with an air of portentous dignity. With rounded if somewhat inflated periods Mr Gair gave us thumbnail histories of every railway commissioner for the last 74 years, the recital sounding rather like one of those genealogical lists in the Old Testament.*<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 3 November 1937 p 1393.

<sup>43</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 3 November 1937 pp 1396-97.

<sup>44</sup> *Courier-Mail* 28 October 1938.

The description of his ponderous speaking style is consistent with the recollections of his former neighbour, Tom Hiley, who entered the House as the Liberal member for Logan in 1944. Hiley recalled that the ‘very serious, hard-working’ Gair ‘spoke, if a bit heavily and pompously, very thoroughly in the House, and he never gave the impression of just glossing things over and taking things lightly.’<sup>45</sup> The *Courier-Mail* report in 1938, as well as describing Gair’s easy to lampoon speaking style, conceded that at least one aspect of his knowledge was not in dispute:

*... there was a grain of truth in his sarcastic criticism of members who in one breath clamoured for electrification, air-conditioning and what-not, and in the next breath deplored increases in freights, fares and taxation.*<sup>46</sup>

In other areas, Gair had good reason for satisfaction with government policies towards his old department. Labor reinstated 250 railway employees very early in their term, and made temporary employees of more than a year’s standing permanent. Together with the surplus (as opposed to the deficit under the Moore government) this showed Gair in November 1933 ‘that the railways have been administered during the last twelve months by a sane government’.<sup>47</sup>

The government continued in these years to administer the railways in a way that presumably was to Gair’s satisfaction. The *Railway Superannuation Repeal Act* corrected problems with the scheme, the right of appeal against promotion (which Moore removed in 1929) was restored, retrenched workshop employees were engaged and 830 new junior staff were employed. To encourage wool producers to use the

---

<sup>45</sup> (Sir) Thomas Hiley, [Interview.] ORAL TRC 253. National Library of Australia, p 1:2/15.

<sup>46</sup> *Courier-Mail* 28 October 1938.

<sup>47</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 16 November 1933, pp 1500-1501.



railway, the freight charges on wool were reduced by 10 percent in June 1933, and a further 10 percent in August 1935.<sup>48</sup>

### 3.4 LABOR UNASSAILABLE

Gair's seat was considered marginal when he first won it in 1932, but the election of 1935 was a different story. Forgan Smith's Labor party had successfully demonstrated its *bona fides* for a wide cross-section of Queenslanders. Less than a year after he was elected, the Governor of Queensland, Sir Leslie Wilson, reported to the Dominions Office that Forgan Smith was 'a man of considerable ability – very clear minded and with a definite purpose.'<sup>49</sup> Ideologically, Forgan Smith's government was one of cautious reform rather than innovation. Frank Waters's view, many years later, was that it was 'pretty hard in retrospect to measure any outstanding event or characteristics of [the Forgan Smith] government.'<sup>50</sup> Gradual reform would be the hallmark of Queensland Labor governments in the twenty-five years between the accession of Forgan Smith and the defeat of Gair,<sup>51</sup> but the broad policy had been previously enunciated by Premier McCormack in 1927: 'We believe that the policy of gradual economic change and gradual betterment of the great mass of the people is the right line for Australia to move on.'<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> John H. Dash, *Legislative and administrative action of the Labor Government and the Railway Department from 18 June 1932 to 28 February 1938: what Labor has promised Labor has done*. [Brisbane: Australian Labor Party], 1938. Copy of pamphlet in Australian Labor Party records, John Oxley Library, Brisbane, OMEQ 58/3.

<sup>49</sup> Leslie Wilson to Dominions Office, 5 June 1933, Wilson Papers, Fryer Memorial Library, University of Queensland. Cited in B J Costar, 'Labor, Politics and Unemployment: Queensland During the Great Depression', Ph D Thesis, University of Queensland, 1981, p 101.

<sup>50</sup> Frank Waters, Interview by Brian Costar, 17 June 1975. Waters Papers. Privately held, but photocopy held by author.

<sup>51</sup> B J Costar, 'Labor, Politics and Unemployment', p xv; Margaret Cribb, 'Trade Union Militancy: Case Studies in Transport', Master of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1972, pp 224-5.

<sup>52</sup> *Brisbane Courier* 24 February 1927.

As well, the Forgan Smith election campaign had an extremely convenient reference point for those tempted to vote against them: the Moore government, which ‘reduced your wages, smashed your ideals, broke industrial awards and dismissed thousands of you from employment.’ According to one election pamphlet, Moore’s government had apprenticed only two boys to government departments in three years of office, despite promising 10 000 jobs. But during three years in office, Labor, which after its election in 1932 had been directed ‘to embark upon the rehabilitation of industry, the restoration of employment, and the building up of commerce’ had ‘pursued a three year’s policy of restoration, providing for the development of all phases of human activity, and benefiting all industrious people.’<sup>53</sup>

By 1935, as Frank Waters recalled, ‘Forgan Smith was regarded by the business community as a safe man, so there was no violent opposition against him, like there was with Jack Lang.’<sup>54</sup> Forgan Smith’s attempts to appeal to all sectors of the community paid off handsomely at the election of 1935, after which it held forty-six seats in a legislature of sixty-two. The Country-Nationalist coalition only held three seats in Brisbane, and none north of Keppel or west of Dalby.<sup>55</sup> Clearly Labor was appealing to voters in almost all areas of Queensland. As one commentator recorded in the highly regarded *Australian Quarterly*:

*The Queensland Labor Party is more than a Labor Party. It is a Labor-cum-National Party. It is the protector of urban interests – whether capital or labour – against spoilation by country interests.*<sup>56</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> William Forgan Smith, *State elections – 1935. My message to YOU as leader of the Labor Party*, Brisbane: Worker, [1935]. Fryer Library, University of Queensland.

<sup>54</sup> Frank Waters, interviewed by Brian Costar, 17 June 1975. Privately held, but photocopy held by author. Jack Lang was, of course, the volatile and abrasive Labor Premier of New South Wales during the Depression, who advocated the repudiation of government debts. The New South Wales governor, Sir Philip Game, dismissed Lang in 1932.

<sup>55</sup> Colin A Hughes, ‘Labor in the Electorates’, in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and Colin A Hughes eds, *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland 1915-57*, p 66.

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Penberthy Fry, ‘State Elections – Queensland’, *Australian Quarterly* June 1935. Fry’s comment was correct, but he incorrectly implied that Labor was not a party that represented agrarian interests. However, from the mid 1920s onwards, Labor had wide appeal to the smaller farmers.

The Nationalists won only three seats of the 20 in Brisbane. The only other seats held by the Country-Nationalist coalition formed after the 1935 election were thirteen agricultural electorates, all east of Toowoomba and all south of Gladstone. Between 1932 and 1935 Labor consolidated its hold on North and Far North Queensland by the free spending of loan money on public developmental works, thus ensuring that the conservatives held no seat north of the Tropic of Capricorn. In addition, the fearsomely anticipated socialist legislation and programs failed to materialise, reassuring those who had voted for Labor in 1932.

The disarray of Labor's political opponents also helped the Forgan Smith government. The history of conservative politics at the state level in Queensland at this time is a tortuous one, and need only be gone into briefly here. After the 1932 election, the Country Party organization was in such dire straits it was forced to suspend its own staff. The hapless party then suffered the humiliation of a breakaway party, the Queensland Party, which, to a large extent, constituted the younger and more energetic among its members. The country parliamentarians sought refuge in a coalition with the urban based Nationalist Party to form the Country Progressive Nationalist Party. This particular incarnation of the conservatives collapsed in 1936 and pleased almost no one, except for the parliamentarians: 'the amalgamation of the Country and National Parties has resulted in a coalition of Country and National parliamentarians, and a coalition of Labour and National voters.' By April 1935, one month before the elections, there were only half a dozen electorates of the 62 'in which there was anything more than a gibbering skeleton of a Country-Nationalist branch.'<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> Thomas Penberthy Fry, 'State Elections – Queensland', *Australian Quarterly* June 1935.

Gair won South Brisbane with ease in 1935, polling 68 percent, his best result ever. It is impossible to apportion how much of the total came about because of his attention to his electorate, and how much was a result of the extremely favourable political situation. However, the 1938 election was a different story.

### 3.5 THE PROTESTANT LABOR PARTY

During the 1930s a breakaway Labor party, the Protestant Labor Party, was formed by non-Catholics that perceived an overly Roman Catholic influence in the state public service, and in the Cabinet, which had seven Catholics in a membership of ten. (The Presbyterian Forgan Smith, and the Anglican Secretary for Public Instruction, Frank Cooper, who ultimately succeeded him, were, however, not among them.) The party organ, the *Protestant Clarion* proclaimed on 3 February 1938 that ‘when one considers that there are approximately five Protestants to one Roman Catholic in the population of Queensland it is obvious how deeply Roman Catholicism has submerged the politics of this state.’ The article cited the fact that the Forgan Smith government consisted of twenty-eight Roman Catholics and sixteen Protestants, and that while seventy-five percent of the public service was Catholic, ninety-five percent of relief workers were Protestant.<sup>58</sup> The 3 March issue carried a letter to the editor

---

<sup>58</sup> In 1938, Forgan Smith had statistical tables prepared on public service recruitment since his accession to the premiership, showing that Catholics and non-Catholics had been employed in reasonably close proportions to their numbers in the Queensland population. QCE Executive Committee minutes, 14 December 1938, cited in DJ Murphy, ‘Organisation, Structure and Finance’ in DJ Murphy, et al, eds. *Labor in power: the Labor party and governments in Queensland 1915-1957*, p 60.

A surviving leaflet in the Political Ephemera collection in the John Oxley Library provides alternative statistical information. Dated 2 April 1938, the Protestant Labour Party candidate for Buranda, J H Webster, without giving a source, claimed, among a great many other statistics, that one (unnamed) department of the State Insurance [Office] had 132 Roman Catholics and only one Protestant, of the

regarding public service jobs: 'Practically all avenues of employment in that direction are closed to Protestant children.' The same paper claimed that the Catholic Hanlon was the 'virtual leader' of the Labor government, while Forgan Smith was only a figurehead. It was a curious claim to make of a political leader whose vigorous leadership was wont to attract press criticism that he was a 'dictator.'<sup>59</sup> Ironically, many years later Gair suggested that Catholics were on the defensive by this time, with a Scots-Presbyterian at the head of the government and a fair number of Protestant ministers in the Cabinet.<sup>60</sup> The last four Labor premiers, Ryan, Theodore, Gillies and McCormack, had been Catholic.

Gair himself fell foul of the new party as well, over a remark he had made in the House on 14 October 1932, over five years previously. Interjecting into a speech by Frank Waters, Gair allegedly said: 'Men went to war to get out of their obligations.' A few days later he claimed in the House that he had been misquoted, but the damage was done and the alleged remark would follow him for decades.<sup>61</sup>

---

eighty-two teachers recently appointed, fifty-six were Catholics, of the seven Supreme Court judges five were Catholics, and, with doubtless sinister albeit unspoken implications for Queensland teeth, three of the four members of the Dental Board were of the Roman Faith. 'Final Appeal to the Electors of Buranda', John Oxley Library.

Similar figures, were published in the *Protestant clarion* on (of all days) 17 March 1938 and cited by Stephanie K Young's 'The Protestant Labour Party', Bachelor of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1971, p 47. Young suggested that although no source was given for the figures, it is possible that they can be accepted because there was no denial by the government. Another explanation is that from the point of view of a strong, incumbent government, it simply was not worth the bother of confirming or denying the claims. If they were true, then the claims had at least some factual legitimacy, the revelation of which could only help the Protestant Labour Party: if they were false, a Government denial would only be met with a counterclaim that would use up energy better expended elsewhere.

<sup>59</sup> Brian Carroll, 'William Forgan Smith: Dictator or Democrat?', in Denis Murphy, et al, eds. *The premiers of Queensland* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 2003, pp 231-232.

<sup>60</sup> Stephanie K Young, 'The Protestant Labour Party', p 25.

<sup>61</sup> *Telegraph* 22 May 1957: *Courier-Mail* 31 July 1957.

Gair's comment was seized on a few years later, with the *Protestant Clarion* posing the rhetorical question on 17 March 1938: 'Were these unpatriotic utterances the forerunner of the strong Fascist sympathies which the Labor government has exhibited during its current term of office?' The paper urged members of the returned soldier's association to 'read what Mr Gair and Mr Waters think of the service you gave your country in war time', and made a play on Gair's initials, saying 'VC GAIR IS NOT GAIR VC.'

*We think the VC which appears before Mr Gair's surname was not acquired through bravery shown on the fields of battle.*

*We assume he is not a returned soldier himself, or this cheap sneer of his would have remained unuttered.*

*Mr [Forgan] Smith, we think you do your cause no good when a vote of confidence is moved in you and your government by a man with such views as Mr Gair.*

Gair retaliated with an election brochure which featured extracts from a letter from the secretary of the local RSAILLA (later, of course, the RSL). In a missive dated 24 March 1938, the secretary referred to Gair as one of the friends 'who will conscientiously do all they can for the men who made it possible for our empire to retain its pride, its prestige, its freedom.'<sup>62</sup>

In the 1938 state election the Protestant Labor Party fielded twenty-three candidates. The new party won the Brisbane seat of Kelvin Grove, displacing Gair's colleague Frank Waters, and gave Hanlon the fright of his political life in Ithaca, also in Brisbane. Hanlon won narrowly, but the losing Protestant Labour Party candidate appealed over alleged poll irregularities. The Election Tribunal found that Hanlon had

---

<sup>62</sup> Pamphlet entitled 'Electors of South Brisbane: Returned Soldiers are Grateful to Mr Gair', Gair Papers, Series 12 Box 14, National Library of Australia.

not been legally elected, but an appeal to the Supreme Court saw the finding reversed and Hanlon's election was confirmed.<sup>63</sup>

In South Brisbane Gair struggled, but held on to his seat. The Protestant Labor Party candidate never looked like winning, but polled twenty percent, most of which came from Gair's landslide majority of 1935. The new party polled almost as many as the United Australia Party, but Gair still received more votes than the two parties combined, eventually receiving 56.54 percent after the redistribution of preferences. The returned incumbent showed in his first speech in the new Parliament that there was little love lost between him, the new party, and the new Protestant Labor Party member, George Morris:

*It is a matter for grave regret that at the last elections the history of the Queensland Parliament should have been blotted by the election to this Parliament of a sectarian candidate who comes here representing only one section of the people. When that member came into this Chamber... he blotted the history of the Parliament of Queensland, and I hope that at the next elections the blot will be erased by his defeat...as the title of his party clearly implies [he is ] only representing a section of the people. The rest of us, I feel sure, represent all the people of our respective electorates, irrespective of politics or creed.<sup>64</sup>*

---

<sup>63</sup> Kenneth W Knight, 'Edward Michael Hanlon: the City Bushman', in D J Murphy, et al, eds. *The premiers of Queensland*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, p 252.

<sup>64</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 11 October 1938 p 792. Over thirty years later, he could still express nothing but contempt for the Protestant Labour Party, saying:

*I saw no merit in it, no virtue in a party which aimed at dividing the people on matters of religion. If they had set themselves up with a view to improving conditions, my attitude might have been different, but they did not even aim at a policy such as that – they went out to cause bitterness, to divide the people, to create bitterness in the minds of people that might not have been there before....Its policy views were limited in base ... It did not aim to influence people on questions of social services and education, for instance, and its chief means of attracting support was drawing attention to what they looked on as discrimination against Protestants in favour of Roman Catholics – its greatest appeal was to the ignorant and the prejudiced.*

Stephanie K Young, 'The Protestant Labour Party', p 27. He always denied that the DLP was a sectarian party. See Mines, *Gair*, pp 90-91; Ray Johnston, 'The Vincent Clair Gair Story', *Sunday Sun* 26 September 1971.

### 3.6 LATER BACKBENCH YEARS

Gair continued to maintain the respect of his peers. When Forgan Smith was reelected, the *Courier Mail* noted that Gair and Jimmy Larcombe, long-serving member for Rockhampton could expect portfolios in the event of changes. However, all Cabinet members were returned and no changes were made. Gair and Larcombe, however, ‘allowed it to be known that they were not aspirants and would stand behind the present Cabinet.’<sup>65</sup>

The next few years would be frustrating for him and at times he must have wondered if he would ever make Cabinet. In February 1939 his name was put forward as a possible assistant minister to cover portfolio responsibilities while one minister was overseas and two others were ill. The transport portfolio was the only one needing a full-time relieving minister, and both Larcombe (a former minister for Railways) and Gair, a long-time Railway Department employee were considered good candidates because of their experience. When the positions were balloted for, Larcombe was elected to the ministry, but the second vacancy was a three-way contest in which, for some reason not recorded in the contemporary press, Gair did not participate.<sup>66</sup>

Possibly Gair’s frustration at this time was the basis of the story that he had been mentioned as a possible Labor candidate for the Federal seat of Griffith, if Forgan Smith did not want the seat. South Brisbane’s state electoral boundaries fell entirely within the seat, but nothing came of the notion.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> *Courier-Mail* 8, 12 April 1938.

<sup>66</sup> *Courier-Mail* 11 February 1939; *Telegraph* 15 February 1939.

<sup>67</sup> *Courier-Mail* 4 April 1939.



He would have better luck in April 1941 when he was nominated for the position of Chairman of Committees. This time, he was expected to win, which he did with a large majority.<sup>68</sup> Gair proved to be a successful chairman of committees, applying himself thoroughly to the study of standing orders, so much so that one newspaper pundit later described him as ‘probably the most efficient chairman the House has ever had.’ It was even suggested that his success in the position was the reason that Forgan Smith was reluctant for him to enter Cabinet, as he saw that no one in the party at the time could control the House as efficiently as Gair.<sup>69</sup>

In February 1942 he came agonizingly close to entering the ministry once more. After the death of the mines minister, John O’Keefe, Gair and Arthur Jones, the member for Charters Towers vied for the position. On the first ballot, the result was a 19 all tie, but on the second ballot, one anonymous member changed his vote and Jones won the position 20-18. The *Courier Mail* speculated that the result was because Jones represented a northern electoral district and there was a need for more Cabinet representation from this region.<sup>70</sup> Gair would have drawn little comfort, however, in the knowledge that Jones had only been in Parliament since 1939.

After four terms in Parliament, Gair could have been forgiven for wondering if he was ever going to be rewarded with a portfolio. His earnest ministering to his electorate, his reasonable level of popularity among his colleagues, the high regard that they had for his ability, and the expertise that he had demonstrated in certain areas had, up to now, counted for nothing. It may have been that all of Gair’s positive characteristics and attributes did not count if Forgan Smith, as Ross McMullin implied, sensed he

---

<sup>68</sup> Mines, *Gair*, p 19: *Courier-Mail* 4, 5 April 1941.

<sup>69</sup> *Truth* 27 January 1952.

<sup>70</sup> *Courier-Mail* 29 January, 10 February 1942.

was troublesome, or, as Brian Costar stated, used his authority to keep him out of Cabinet.<sup>71</sup>

At something of a loose end with his political career, Gair considered joining the RAAF. He obtained a reference from Forgan Smith. The premier's reference was complimentary, but characteristically, not effusive:

*Mr Gair has acquitted himself most creditably in the discharge of his Parliamentary duties...I am confident that he will be indefatigable in the efficient discharge of any service which might be allotted to him in this sphere.*  
<sup>72</sup>

If the reference was ever used, Gair did not take up any offers of military service that it facilitated. On 16 September 1942, Forgan Smith, after a record term as premier of Queensland, precipitately retired from politics, and Gair's political fortunes changed.

---

<sup>71</sup> Ross McMullin, *The light on the hill: the Australian Labor Party 1891-1991*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, p 191: Brian Costar, 'Smith, William Forgan, 1887-1953', *Australian dictionary of biography*, vol 11, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988. McMullin states that Gair was 'out of favour', but does not offer any evidence for this, or suggest a reason why. Similarly, Costar does not offer any evidence to back up his statement.

<sup>72</sup> Typescript, [Reference from William Forgan Smith] 26 February 1942. Gair Papers, Series 1 Correspondence Box 14, National Library of Australia..

## **CHAPTER FOUR: THE MINISTERIAL YEARS, 1942-1952**

## 4.1 THE MINISTER FOR MINES

In the ministerial reshuffle after the sudden resignation of Premier William Forgan Smith on 9 September 1942, Gair was appointed minister for mines in the cabinet of incoming Premier Frank Cooper, a former minister for public instruction and treasurer. Outgoing Premier Forgan Smith congratulated Gair on his new position and told the younger man that he would have appointed him to Cabinet sooner or later. Gair reportedly replied, with characteristic bluntness ‘You took your time, you old bugger.’<sup>1</sup>

The *Truth* welcomed the new minister with a bit of gently satirical doggerel verse, which, if poor poetry, was a perceptive and cogent appraisal of someone who was then a political unknown:

*An industry that never pants,  
A mem’ry like an elephant’s,  
A nous that takes him everywhere,  
A wit as tart as Vinny-Gair!*<sup>2</sup>

Gair’s promotion did not, apparently, affect his speaking style in the parliament. His first speech as a minister ‘was delivered with a sonorous, impressive dignity, his right hand hidden in his capacious coat pocket and his left hand clutching the notes of his speech which he used like a conductor’s baton with rhythmic effect to emphasise his points.’<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Frank Mines, *Gair* Canberra: Arrow, 1975, p 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Truth* 27 September 1942.

<sup>3</sup> *Telegraph* 22 September 1942. The journalist was Clem Lack.

It was an eventful time for mines and mining in Queensland. Gold mines were closed and manpower was either diverted to the fighting forces or to the extraction of the base metals required more urgently by the war effort.<sup>4</sup> The new minister worked hard. After a particularly grueling tour of mines in north Queensland he quipped that he returned home four inches shorter - after walking that much off his feet!<sup>5</sup> When a journalist writing a feature story about the long hours worked by ministers interviewed Gair, the minister for mines pointed at a package on the table and said:

*There's my weekend reading. I expected to see Quentin Reynolds. I wouldn't have been surprised by a detective story. Instead I saw a sheaf of dull looking red books tied up with string and entitled 'Oil Shale' ... So much of the day is taken up with interviewing people that nights are all I have left for checking up on the files and departmental matters.*<sup>6</sup>

As a minister, he realized his limitations and lack of experience: even after more than two years in the job, he referred to his 'limited knowledge of the mining potentialities of Queensland.'<sup>7</sup> But he worked hard to rectify this deficiency, and not without some help :

*Little previous association with the mining industry necessitated close study and application to achieve a satisfactory grasp of its numerous technical problems: however, this task has been lightened by the willing co-operation of all sections of the mining community, especially experienced officers of the Department.*<sup>8</sup>

Gair the minister was entitled to a private secretary, and he found one (and a lifelong friend) in Condon Bryan Byrne, who was then private secretary to the Attorney-General, John O 'Keefe. Although John McCracken, the Public Service

---

<sup>4</sup> *Courier-Mail* 7 November 1942.

<sup>5</sup> *Truth* 27 December 1942.

<sup>6</sup> *Sunday Mail* 14 March 1943. Quentin Reynolds was a popular author of the day, whose best known work was probably a ghost-written autobiography of American bank robber Willie Sutton.

<sup>7</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 2 November 1944, p.

<sup>8</sup> *Queensland Government Mining Journal* 20 October 1943.

Commissioner wished to put his own nominee in the position, Gair had already earmarked Byrne for the job, and there was a battle of wills before Gair got the person he wanted.

Mines in Queensland is never a minor portfolio and Gair now got control over various and diverse subdepartmental organizations, including the Geological Survey, the Mining Wardens' Courts, the Queensland Coal Board and various state coal mines, hangovers from the state enterprises created by the Ryan government a generation previously. Queensland was third among the Australian states in terms of mineral production: Gair's years as a minister were marked by the increasing demand for Queensland coal, both within the state and in other parts of Australia. This was because of the increased rail traffic brought about by the transport of troops and military personnel to the northern part of Queensland.<sup>9</sup>

One of his achievements as minister for mines was to close down the last of the state enterprise mines, ending an era begun with the administration of T J Ryan. Even the Moore government had kept the Chillagoe smelters going for political reasons,<sup>10</sup> but Gair showed little sentiment in having them shut down in May 1943. At the time he cited the marked decline of ore supplies and the lack of indication that things would improve. Chillagoe had kept going while they were the only copper smelters in the state, but smelters had recently been established at Mount Morgan and Mount Isa. The

---

<sup>9</sup> Frank Mines, *Gair*, pp 23-24. Byrne later served with Gair as a DLP Senator (1968-1974.) He was elected to the Senate under the Labor party banner in 1951 but left the party when it split, terming himself a QLP Senator until his defeat in 1959. His sense of integrity was strongly developed. When he left the ALP he handed back all papers and correspondence that had come into his possession as an ALP Senator back to the Federal secretary, and he never made public reference to any private conversations he had had with his former ALP colleagues. See Sir James Killen's obituary of Byrne in the *Australian* 15 December 1993.

<sup>10</sup> Murphy, D J. 'State Enterprises', in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and C A Hughes, eds. *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland, 1915-57*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980, p 154.

operation at Chillagoe had lost £400 000 since 1929 despite assistance from the government. For the fiscally pragmatic Gair, there was only one course of action to take. The minister did not forget, however, the 115 workers at the smelters, and noted that they would be readily absorbed into other mining operations associated with the war effort.<sup>11</sup> Nor was he shortsighted enough to anticipate that this would not lead to some unpopularity with those affected. Shortly afterwards, on a trip to Cairns, he said:

*I suppose when it was known that I was to leave Brisbane for Cairns and district, the citizens of Cairns and Chillagoe sharpened their teeth to get a piece of the man who was closing Chillagoe.  
The fact is the government did not close the smelters: the smelters closed themselves for want of ores.*<sup>12</sup>

#### **4.2 THE CABINET'S HARD MAN – MINISTER FOR LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT**

In April 1943 Gair acquired the additional portfolio of Labour and Employment. His innovations in this portfolio were relatively minor because most of the reforms (some of which were considered radical for the time) to industrial legislation had been achieved by previous governments. However, ironic as it was to be in the context of later events, Gair was the minister who introduced legislation establishing a general forty-hour working week, which will be covered in a later section of this chapter. However, much of his work during his time in the portfolio was enmeshed with the immediate postwar period's industrial unrest, the worst in Queensland's history.

As minister for labour and employment, Gair, writing on 28 November 1945 outlined the proposals for a conference on 'industrial unrest' which was to be held in Canberra a couple of weeks hence. The resulting document articulated the rhetoric of the

---

<sup>11</sup> *Telegraph* 12 May 1943.

<sup>12</sup> *Cairns post* 12 July 1943.

Hanlon government, even if some of the premises outlined in the document were contradictory. The document stated that ‘industrial unrest in the Commonwealth is more intense now as compared to the unrest existing in normal times’ but claimed that over the last two or three decades there had been a change ‘in favour of improving industrial relations.’ In Gair’s view the Industrial Court could successfully arbitrate on any areas of industrial conflict, and was an independent body that did so without any government interference.<sup>13</sup>

Gair also believed that the state should have more power in industrial affairs and that some industries that were subject to Commonwealth industrial jurisdiction would have their industrial relations improved ‘if the Commonwealth Industrial Court cancelled the awards applying to them and permitted the Industrial Court of Queensland to prescribe wages and working conditions.’ The industries that Gair had in mind were those like coalmining, shipping and the waterfront which were all vital industries, all subject to Federal awards and in which the industrial relations situation was, in the context of postwar industrial unrest, extremely poor.<sup>14</sup>

Gair had strong reasons for wanting more power in industrial affairs for his department. The second half of the 1940s was a time of an upsurge of militant union activity across Australia as unions attempted to make up ground that had been lost in terms of improved working conditions during the war years. The Queensland

---

<sup>13</sup> Minister of Labour and Industry 28 November 1945, Queensland State Archives, Department of Labour and Industry, A9896, cited in Kay Saunders, ‘A Model in These Matters? State Intervention in Queensland during the 1946 Meat Workers and 1948 Railway Strikes’, *Royal Australian Historical Society Journal* v 76 no 2 October 1990.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*



industrial scene was marked by two major strikes, the meat industry strike in 1946 and an even more severe railway dispute in 1948.

On 4 March 1946 the management of the Queensland Co-operative Bacon Association at Murrarie, Brisbane, dismissed four of its employees, all of whom were members of the Australian Meat Industry Employee's Union (AMIEU.) AMIEU members at Murrarie, and later at a meat preserving works at Oxley decided to strike in support of the sacked workers. Gair tried to neutralise the conflict by unsuccessfully attempting to persuade the Industrial Court to conduct a wrongful dismissal hearing, and he and Hanlon urged the union leader, A J Neumann, to argue such a case before the court. The union refused, arguing that even if the decision was favourable to them, it would not establish the general principle of seniority in Queensland industrial relations practice: they saw the right to hire and fire as a negation of industrial justice.<sup>15</sup>

When the strike started to seriously affect the supply of overseas shipments to Britain, the Federal minister for commerce and agriculture, William Scully, requested Hanlon to explain the gravity of the situation to the unions. On behalf of the AMIEU members, Neumann informed the premier that the union was prepared to resume work on pre-strike conditions and to 'cut its losses' in a compromise that would bring the cases of the four Murrarie employees before the court. Hanlon relayed the information to the employers, but they did not act on the offer, stressing their commitment to arbitration. Gair appealed to them to confer with the AMIEU but the employers

---

<sup>15</sup> Douglas Blackmur, *Strikes: causes, conduct, consequences* Annandale, NSW: Federation Press, 1993, p 61, citing *The Meat Industry Journal of Queensland* January 1946 and Transcript, Case no 106 of 1946, Office of the Industrial Registrar, Brisbane, p 24. See also Brad Bowden, *A breed apart: the history of the Bacon Factories Union of Employees, 1946-1996*, Moorooka, Q: Boolarong, 1996.

claimed that to do so would go beyond the order of the court. A mass meeting of workers on 10 May discussed the employer's attitude and decided to continue the strike. Gair's attempt at bringing the parties together had failed.<sup>16</sup> A further attempt by Hanlon and Gair the next month to bring the parties to the negotiating table failed as well, despite their attempts to convince the employers to agree to a meeting.<sup>17</sup>

Although these attempts to end the strike were to no avail, negotiations with Hanlon, Gair, and Ted Walsh, the minister for transport, were instrumental in stopping the dispute from spreading to the railways. Railway workers had imposed bans on the transport of 'black' products and been fined: the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen (AFULE) asked Hanlon on 19 June that the fines be remitted so that they could have a face-saving way to extricate themselves from the proposed strike. Hanlon, Gair and Walsh refused, citing their commitment to arbitration, but the union withdrew from further action anyway. This was a severe blow to the meatworkers, because without the cooperation and participation of the AFULE, there was no chance that the ARU could bring about the cessation of the railway service. The ARU was fully aware of this, and withdrew from their proposed strike action as well.<sup>18</sup> Although the waterside workers and the miners supported the meatworkers, and took some strike action, and a state of emergency was proclaimed on 28 June, the AMIEU branch executive decided to return to work, a decision that caused some divisions within the union itself, not to mention the Queensland labour movement as a whole.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Douglas Blackmur, *Strikes: causes, conduct and consequences*, p 71.

<sup>17</sup> Douglas Blackmur, *Strikes: causes, conduct and consequences*, p 82.

<sup>18</sup> Douglas Blackmur, *Strikes: causes, conduct and consequences*, p 82.

<sup>19</sup> Douglas Blackmur, 'The Meat Industry Strike 1946', in D J Murphy, ed *The big strikes, Queensland 1889-1965*, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1983, pp 228-230.

Politically, Queensland Labor was under severe pressure in the postwar years. Electoral support had declined gradually through the 1940s.<sup>20</sup> The 1947 election, held between the two major strikes, was a narrow escape for the Labor party, which won thirty-five seats in a legislature of sixty-two. Nine of these were won by Labor with less than fifty percent of the vote. Labor was fragmented into breakaway groups in north Queensland: the North Queensland Labor Party returned a member for Mundingburra in the person of Tom Aikens in 1944. Key unions refused to join or reaffiliate with the party because of its perceived entrenched conservatism with regard to industrial reforms, weakening it electorally.<sup>21</sup>

The 1947 election would be extremely fateful for Gair and for the future political history of Queensland, for two reasons. In the safe Country Party seat of Nanango, a peanut farmer named Johannes Bjelke-Petersen was elected to Parliament, although the significance of this event would not be appreciated for over two decades.

Of more immediate historical consequences was the surprise result in the seat of Mirani, which covered the hinterland of Mackay. The Country Party's Ernest Evans defeated Deputy Premier Ted Walsh. The significance of this would not be appreciated for some years, but for Gair the temporary removal of Walsh was extremely fortuitous. Eleven days after the election, on 14 May 1947, Gair secured the deputy leadership of the parliamentary Labor party, and thus the deputy premiership of Queensland by one vote.<sup>22</sup> He was deputy premier and minister for labour when Queensland experienced one of the bitterest strikes in its history.

---

<sup>20</sup> Election figures for the Labor party at the three state elections held during the 1940s were: 51.41 percent in 1941 (41 seats won), 44.67 percent in 1944 (37 seats) and 43.58 percent in 1947 (35 seats.)

<sup>21</sup> Douglas Blackmur, 'The Meat Industry Strike 1946', p 218.

<sup>22</sup> *Telegraph* 14 May 1947. Gair defeated the treasurer, James Larcombe, 18-17 on the third ballot.

The railway strike of 1948 originated out of the labour shortages engendered by the massive war effort on the part of that government department. Queensland emerged from the war with an exhausted infrastructure requiring a massive capital influx, but with an economic base that was essentially the same as before the war. During the war years, the Commissioner for Railways reported, the volume of traffic 'was such that every locomotive, carriage and wagon which could be run with safety was pressed into service.'<sup>23</sup> Some categories of railwaymen were working over 70 hours a week, despite a 29 percent increase in staff numbers between 1939 and 1944.<sup>24</sup>

Although they were very much in demand, railway employees had failed to obtain, through the courts, increases in margins for skills, leaving them discontented. Eventually the government offered, late in 1947, an increase which the unions rejected. At this stage, Gair was informed that industrial action against the government was likely, but the government refused to vary its offer, indicative, as Douglas Blackmur remarked, that it was willing to risk a major industrial dispute over the issue. At midnight on 3 February 1948 employees in Queensland railway workshops ceased work. The railway service was closed down in the second week of the strike. With the aid of the Federal government, an emergency road and air transport was set up, and the federal authorities made it very difficult for railway workers to receive social service benefits. In the face of these difficulties, the strikers remained determined. The government declared a state of emergency, banned picketing and made it an offence to disobey an order of the Industrial Court. When the

---

<sup>23</sup> 'Annual Report of the Commissioner for Railways, 1947', *Queensland Parliamentary Papers*, I, 1945-46, p 573.

<sup>24</sup> John D Kerr, *Triumph of narrow gauge: a history of Queensland railways*, Brisbane: Boolarong, 1990, pp 161-2, 165.

state of emergency did not achieve its desired effect, the government passed legislation aimed at ending the strike.<sup>25</sup>

The *Industrial Law Amendment act* of 10 March 1948, passed to combat the exigencies of the railway strike were particularly draconian and repressive. While it is conceded that the Labor government of the day did not aim ‘so much as to destroy unionism but to render militancy contained and passive within the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration system’, it certainly added new dimensions to their ‘willingness to use variable powers of persuasion, propaganda and overt coercion to achieve industrial ‘peace’.’<sup>26</sup>

The legislation greatly extended the powers of the police. Police were granted the power to enter any home or building, to disperse any gathering and to arrest without warrant. The onus of proof was reversed and placed on the defendants. The opinion of a police officer was sufficient proof of a misdemeanour. Even the conservative, but in this case pro-Labor government *Courier-Mail* commented ‘These powers ... are the most far-reaching ever given to the police in any state in Australia.’<sup>27</sup> Hanlon won no friends among the union movement for his hardline stance, with the bitterness lasting for years afterward. Viv Daddow, Secretary of the Southern District of the ARU from 1940 to 1964 commented that the strike ‘showed to the world a government’s tyranny and contempt for the first principles of the labour movement, principles which Hanlon had endorsed in his rise to political power.’ In Daddow’s view, the legislation

---

<sup>25</sup> Douglas Blackmur, ‘The Railway Strike of 1948’ in D J Murphy, ed., *The big strikes: Queensland 1889-1965*, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1983.

<sup>26</sup> Kay Saunders, ‘A model in these matters? State intervention in Queensland during the 1946 Meat Workers and 1948 Railway strikes’, *Royal Australian Historical Society Journal* v 76 no 2 October 1990.

<sup>27</sup> *Courier-Mail* 10 March 1948.

‘smashed the last vestige of right, in the estimation of the trade union movement, the Queensland government may have still held to the claim of being “Labor”.’<sup>28</sup>

At the time, Frank Nolan, Queensland secretary of the ARU, said in the union’s newspaper, the *Railway Advocate*: ‘Hanlon, backed by a weak, timid and venal party, has been guilty of a gross abuse of authority. He has trampled on justice and spat in the face of Freedom.’<sup>29</sup> Nolan’s wrath had not abated by 1975, when he commented:

*If ever there was a weak collection of salary-chasing opportunist humbugs devoid of even a semblance of working-class principles, it was the members of the Labor Party led by Hanlon. No Tory government could have been more vicious.*<sup>30</sup>

Several Communist Party activists had been jailed for failing to pay fines for breaches of the anti-picketing law after the collapse of the strike in early April. But on 19 August an anonymous person placed an envelope containing a sum of money that approximately covered the fines on the inquiry counter of the Treasury Department. The mystery of the identity of the anonymous person was never solved, but the Communist Party claimed in the 20 August 1948 issue of the *Queensland Guardian* that the payment had been made ‘by an agent of the Hanlon government.’ Gair, acting premier while Hanlon was interstate, said that this was ‘ridiculous in the extreme’ and that the Communists themselves had paid the money ‘to save face.’<sup>31</sup> After all, Gair said, ‘If the government has paid the fines ... it will be revealed in the Auditor-General’s report, which accounts for every penny of government spending.’<sup>32</sup> Many years later, however, Gair changed his story and claimed that Hanlon had arranged for

---

<sup>28</sup> Viv Daddow, *The puffing pioneers and Queensland railway builders*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, pp 165, 167.

<sup>29</sup> *Railway Advocate* 25 March 1948.

<sup>30</sup> Frank Nolan, *You pass this way only once: reflections of a trade union leader*, Stafford, Q: Colonial Press, 1975, p 98.

<sup>31</sup> Clem Lack, *Three decades of Queensland political history 1929-1960*, p 324.

<sup>32</sup> *Sunday Mail* 22 August 1948.

them to be paid: as Douglas Blackmur notes, however, 'it is difficult to know how much weight to place on Gair's claim especially in view of the fact that he had a personal dislike for Hanlon.'<sup>33</sup> Whatever the case, there seemed to be an air of prearrangement around the whole episode: twenty minutes after their release, the Communists were at the Trades Hall enjoying a prepared chicken lunch.<sup>34</sup>

The strike-breaking legislation was repealed in September 1948, only a few months after the government's victory in the rail strike. In introducing the repeal bill, Hanlon said that having definitely established the supremacy of the law and punished the strike ringleaders, the government had decided to be merciful to the less prominent, 'misled' participants in the dispute and would recommend to the Executive Council the remission of the remainder of the penalties. The debate was a stormy one, with Opposition leader Frank Nicklin describing the measures as a 'government retreat from Moscow.'<sup>35</sup>

Years later it was claimed that Hanlon took the harsh line against the strikers that he did because of the possibility of being replaced by Gair if he did not.<sup>36</sup> The same writer also claimed that it was Gair who urged the declaration of states of emergency in 1946 and 1948<sup>37</sup> and he generally wanted a hard line against unions.<sup>38</sup> Ken Knight cited the strongly anti- Communist viewpoints of influential members of the Hanlon

---

<sup>33</sup> *Telegraph* 10 January 1977: Douglas Blackmur, *Strikes: causes, conduct and consequences* Annandale, NSW, Federation Press, 1993, p 176.

<sup>34</sup> *Truth* 22 August 1948. The mystery regarding the payment of the fines endures. In 2006, Connie Healy, widow of Mick Healy, one of the incarcerated strikers, told me that she did not know who paid it. 'There was talk that a private person had paid the fine – but most thought it had been engineered by Hanlon.' Connie Healy, email to author, 12 May 2006.

<sup>35</sup> Clem Lack, *Three decades of Queensland political history 1929 - 1960*, op. cit, p 334.

<sup>36</sup> Ross Fitzgerald, *Fred Paterson: Australia's only Communist Party member of Parliament: the people's champion* St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1990, p 205.

<sup>37</sup> Ross Fitzgerald and Harold Thornton, *Labor in Queensland: 1880 to 1988*, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1989, p 53.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p 55.

Cabinet such as Gair, and, ironically, in the light of the events of a decade later, Transport Minister Jack Duggan.<sup>39</sup> Fitzgerald and Thornton went as far as to call Gair the ‘unrepentant architect of the 1948 emergency powers.’<sup>40</sup>

In the absence of a Cabinet Secretariat (one would not be established until the advent of the Country-Liberal party government in 1957) it is difficult to ascribe any degree of responsibility to individual ministers, including Gair, to the formulation of the legislation used to deal with the 1948 railway strike. Under Labor governments, cabinet submissions were not circulated before meetings and no minutes of Cabinet discussions were kept. Individual ministers simply noted cabinet decisions on the appropriate files, sometimes causing problems in establishing exactly what had been decided.<sup>41</sup> When moving the condolence motion for his former chief in March 1952, Premier Gair would only say of the 1946 and 1948 strikes that ‘in those clashes Mr Hanlon enjoyed the fullest support of his ministerial colleagues and the other members of his party.’<sup>42</sup>

In the absence of Cabinet minutes the point is open to dispute, but Duggan was asked in 1985: ‘Did you think that Hanlon acted the way he did because he was afraid that Gair would take over if he didn’t take the hard line?’ Duggan answered: ‘No, I don’t think Hanlon ever felt intimidated by Gair. He mightn’t have liked the man and it

---

<sup>39</sup> K W Knight, ‘Edward Michael Hanlon: a City Bushman’, in *The premiers of Queensland*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 2003, p 265.

<sup>40</sup> Fitzgerald and Thornton, *Labor in Queensland*, p 141.

<sup>41</sup> Barry Cotterell, ‘The Machinery of Government’ in D J Murphy, et al, eds *Labor in power: the Labor party and governments in Queensland 1915-1957*, pp 92-93.

<sup>42</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 11 March 1952, p 1661.



might have been mutual but I could never conceive of a situation where Hanlon was likely to be defeated in caucus.’<sup>43</sup>

In some ways the railway strike of 1948 provided a prelude for the split almost a decade later. The parliamentary wing of the Australian Labor Party in Queensland, the legislators, won out over those who essayed to use industrial action to achieve their ends, highlighting the divisions and tensions between the two wings. Problematic relations between the two wings were not new. Late in 1945 the Parliamentary Labor party had accused the QCE of failing to maintain a close liaison between all sections of the party, especially the industrial wing.<sup>44</sup> The strike was a major episode in the series of power struggles within the party that would eventually lead to the split of 1957 and over three decades in the wilderness for Labor in Queensland.<sup>45</sup>

Douglas Blackmur has raised several specific points elaborating this. It is likely that key figures in the labour movement, appalled by the government’s actions during both the meat and railway strikes, learned to distrust and dislike members of that government, accounting for, in part, the vicious personality clashes that were the hallmark of the 1957 split.<sup>46</sup> Gair’s claim during the condolence motion for Hanlon was certainly an exaggeration: ‘when [industrial] peace was restored he had retained the respect and frequently won the good will of his opponents, who, at length, saw the wisdom of the government’s stand at the time.’<sup>47</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> Jack Duggan [Interview] no 8, 1 and 3 August 1985 p 6.

<sup>44</sup> Parliamentary Labor Party, *Minutes*, 14 November 1945, cited in Douglas Blackmur, ‘Industrial Relations Under an Australian State Labor Government: the Hanlon Government in Queensland, 1946-1952’, Ph D Thesis, University of Queensland, 1986, p 65.

<sup>45</sup> Brian Costar, ‘Brisbane or Prague? The 1912 and 1948 Strikes’ in *Brisbane retrospect: eight aspects of Brisbane history*, Brisbane: Library Board of Queensland, 1978, p 121.

<sup>46</sup> Douglas Blackmur, *Strikes: causes, conduct and consequences*, p209.

<sup>47</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 11 March 1952 p 1661.

Blackmur also has suggested that the status of the Queensland Industrial Court was so badly damaged by its lacklustre performance in the meat and railway strikes that a decade later the unions decided not to approach it on major matters relating to employment conditions but instead turn to the government for improvements in these areas.<sup>48</sup> There would be major implications for the government of Premier Vince Gair when it refused, a decade later, to legislate for three weeks' annual leave for employees under state awards.

### **4.3 GAIR VERSUS COLIN CLARK**

Industrial relations was not the only field in his Labor and Industry portfolio in which there was friction between Gair and those with whom he had to deal. The field of industrial development saw some clashed with one of his senior public servants, Colin Clark, a man with a worldwide reputation as an economist.<sup>49</sup>

Colin Clark was Director of the Bureau of Industry from 1938 to 1952 and State Statistician and financial advisor to the Treasury from 1946 to 1952. In his early years his enthusiasm for Australia, and in particular Queensland, could hardly be doubted.

In a 1941 letter to his friend J M Keynes, he wrote:

*When you leave England for Australia you get a strange feeling that you have somehow jumped ten years into the future, and when you come to Queensland you jump ten years further. Queensland is a predominantly rural and small enterprise economy, with a very equalitarian distribution of income and property, very generous social services, compulsory Trade Unionism, and all matters of wages, hours and working conditions judicially controlled by the*

---

<sup>48</sup> Douglas Blackmur, *Strikes: causes, conduct and consequences* p 210.

<sup>49</sup> In 1987, Clark was named a Distinguished Fellow of the Australian Economic Society. Christopher I Higgins, 'Colin Clark: An Interview', *Economic Record* September 1989.

*Arbitration court, which now has such prestige that both sides always accept its decision.*<sup>50</sup>

He had little respect for Gair as the political agent for development of the Queensland economy. Gair was acting as premier in 1948 when Clark sent him an unsolicited letter outlining a scheme for state development. Clark called for the establishment of a new, co-ordinatory ministry, the Ministry of State Development. This new ministry would provide for 'close co-ordination of policies for migration, rural development, industry and mining development, transport and works.' Working alongside the new ministry would be a State Department Council, the function of which would be to apportion labour, materials and money to competing proposals.<sup>51</sup> However, the proposals were never taken up: in 1948 the Bureau of Industry's influence was declining.<sup>52</sup> Clark remained forever convinced that his broad policy recommendations for an economy based on primary and tertiary industries with little manufacture and a dispersed population were sound.<sup>53</sup>

Gair's commitment to development and Clark's antagonism towards Gair over the issue of decentralisation must be examined in the context of changing times. The postwar years saw the start of an inexorable trend from away from rural based industries and employment to those that were urban based. Gair's predecessor Ned Hanlon, was called 'the city bushman' by his biographer, K W Knight, because he

---

<sup>50</sup> Quoted in Angus Maddison, 'Quantifying and Interpreting World Development: Macromasurement Before and After Colin Clark', *Australian Economic History Review* vol 44 no 1, March 2004.

<sup>51</sup> Queensland State Archives, Labour and Industry Department, General Correspondence, A/9832, letter of 9 December 1948, cited in Chilla Bulbeck, 'Colin Clark and the Greening of Queensland: the Influence of a Senior Public Servant on Queensland Economic Development 1938 to 1952', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* vol 33 no 1 1987.

<sup>52</sup> Chilla Bulbeck, 'Colin Clark and the Greening of Queensland.'

<sup>53</sup> Christopher I Higgins, 'Colin Clark: An Interview', *Economic Record*, September 1989. During the interviews on which this article is based, Clark said: 'We'll get there, but having wasted a lot of time on the way.' The interview was recorded in August and September 1988. Clark died in September 1989.

was, both in and out of Parliament, the staunchest advocate of rural-based economic policies.<sup>54</sup> But as D J Murphy noted, the dreams of unlimited agricultural settlement and development subsided with the death of Hanlon. The policies of Gair and his agriculture minister, Harold Collins, were more about consolidating the achievements of previous administrations rather than breaking new ground.<sup>55</sup> With postwar industrialisation, Clark (a late convert to Catholicism) had a somewhat idiosyncratic vision of paradise regained on a series of small farms with a simple lifestyle that encompassed voluntary frugality, communion with God, and an intensive settlement of the land that would put a brake on further industrialisation. At the time, and afterwards, most would perceive the idea as one that was anachronistic and unorthodox.<sup>56</sup> At times, Clark's peers did not know what to make of him, with one writing of Clark and his economic theories a few years later: 'Among economists Colin Clark has the reputation of being brilliant, original, provocative, eccentric – and, sometimes, just plain wrong.'<sup>57</sup>

On the other hand, while Gair did not break new ground with his rural development policies, much of his energy went into the creation of large scale developmental projects that were located in and beneficial to rural areas. Later on, in the Senate, he cited the Burdekin River high level railway and traffic bridge, the Burdekin River flood prevention, hydro-electric and irrigation scheme, the Tully Falls hydro-electric

---

<sup>54</sup> Kenneth W Knight, 'Edward Michael Hanlon: A City Bushman', in D J Murphy, et al, *The premiers of Queensland*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, 2003, pp 244, 254.

<sup>55</sup> D J Murphy, 'Agriculture 1932-1957', in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and Colin A Hughes, eds, *Labor in power: the Labor party and governments in Queensland 1915-57*, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980, p 217.

<sup>56</sup> Blanche d'Alpuget, *Robert J Hawke: a biography*. Melbourne: Schwartz, 1990, pp 57, 73.

<sup>57</sup> *Observer*, 1 June 1958. The writer was John Pringle, who was reviewing Clark's *Australian hopes and fears*. (London: Hollis and Carter, 1958.)

scheme, the Walsh River irrigation scheme, the Mareeba-Dimbulah scheme and the Tinaroo Dam.<sup>58</sup>

Gair did not include the long-mooted Burdekin Dam on his list. The proposed Burdekin Dam constituted a major headache for Gair and his government. The project, originally envisaged as costing £29 million at its 1945 inception, had ballooned to a cost of £70 million by 1950.<sup>59</sup> The idea was to tame the Burdekin River and its tributaries, agents of numerous destructive floods in the lower reaches, especially the closely settled delta. The floods would be mitigated, the enormous volumes of water would be used for agriculture and their latent power would be harnessed. Few superlatives were spared in promoting the Burdekin Scheme, with an increase of 50 000 population in the region, and a dam capacity of sixteen times that of Sydney Harbour being among the statistics bandied around.<sup>60</sup>

The project, however, was soon bogged down by, along with the inherent difficulties, a complete lack of Commonwealth cooperation in the form of funding for the venture. In 1951, the year before Gair became premier, the Burdekin River Authority carried out an economic investigation of the scheme, and concluded that the price of water could not be fixed high enough to pay for the interest on the headworks and channels of the dam and that the state would have to pay at least half the cost of maintaining the irrigation channels. Even so, the Authority believed the scheme was viable, as two-fifths of the gross output from the crops and cattle produced under irrigation would revert to the state. Disturbingly, however, the Authority neglected to mention

---

<sup>58</sup> CPD Senate 1970 p 273.

<sup>59</sup> Ross Fitzgerald, *From 1915 to the early 1980s: a history of Queensland*, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1984, p 190.

<sup>60</sup> Powell, J M. *Plains of promise: rivers of destiny: water management and the development of Queensland 1824-1990*. Brisbane: Boolarong, 1991, pp 240-242.

that greater gross outputs from similar investments of capital could have been obtained by other forms of agricultural subsidisation, and omitted to factor in the annual costs associated with the scheme.<sup>61</sup>

Colin Clark was a severe critic of the scheme. Clark argued that the Burdekin project plumbed 'new depths in political chicane and bogus economics'<sup>62</sup> and that it was 'about the most fantastically uneconomic project that has ever been put forward, even by Australian standards'<sup>63</sup> He conceded there was a case for flood mitigation work but said there was no justification for 'a grandiose project for irrigation' in a region where one section of the soil was already fertile and the other was comparatively unfertile and not worth the expense of irrigation.<sup>64</sup> At the time, Federal treasurer Arthur Fadden had commented on the difficulties of selling the sugar that was being produced. There was no need for the opening of more sugar lands.<sup>65</sup> The project was abandoned in 1955 for lack of funds. It was revived when, according to former Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen's account, Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, moved by the need to defend a couple of seats in the area for the 1980 Federal elections, agreed to build the dam if the state government would build the necessary canals (which were more expensive than the dam in any case.)<sup>66</sup> Chiefly financed by the Hawke government, in 1988 the Burdekin Falls Dam was filled for the first time: its role would be to supply water to Townsville.

---

<sup>61</sup> Davidson, B R. *The northern myth: a study of the physical and economic limits to agricultural and pastoral development in tropical Australia*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1965, p 139.

<sup>62</sup> Colin Clark, *Australian hopes and fears*, p 88.

<sup>63</sup> Colin Clark, 'Has Australia Got Water on the Brain?', *New Commonwealth* (London), 18 March 1954.

<sup>64</sup> Colin Clark, *Australian hopes and fears*, p 88.

<sup>65</sup> Christopher I Higgins, 'Colin Clark: An Interview', *Economic Record*, September 1989. In 1961 Gair would explicitly refer to the overproduction of sugar, which he said came about because since 1954 production had increased by 41 percent but consumption had only increased by 29 percent. *Evening Advocate* (Innisfail) 27 November 1961.

<sup>66</sup> Joh Bjelke-Petersen, *Don't you worry about that! the Joh Bjelke-Petersen memoirs*. North Ryde, NSW: Collins/Angus and Robertson, 1990, p 152.

The Burdekin Dam imbroglio was only one aspect of the development policies that Gair espoused and enacted and that Clark opposed. Many years later Clark would view Gair as his principal adversary and the one that took Queensland 'from the highest growth state to the lowest growth state'.<sup>67</sup> Clark resigned a few days after Gair took over as premier, 'because of increasing differences of opinion on policy with the state government.' In a radio broadcast he attacked politicians of all parties and both levels of government for the over-development of secondary industry at the expense of the primary sector.<sup>68</sup> Gair responded to Clark's barbs by reminding Queenslanders that Clark 'has not always been right', and that in 1947 Clark had advised the Lands Department to change from sheep to cattle because there was no money in wool, and that in 1950 he had advised that developing coal resources was a waste of money because atomic energy would be used.<sup>69</sup>

There could have been little room for doubt who he meant when, upon announcing his intention to resign, Clark said: 'I leave the government service on good terms with all but one minister.'<sup>70</sup> Any mystery as to the identity of the minister was made clear two years later when Clark declared:

*May I point out to Mr Gair that I would not have resigned a well-paid and interesting job, and left my comfortable home, had I not thought it urgently necessary to protest against his management of affairs.*<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> Colin Clark interview 3 February 1986, cited in Chilla Bulbeck, 'Colin Clark and the Greening of Queensland'.

<sup>68</sup> *Courier-Mail* 19 January 1952.

<sup>69</sup> *Telegraph* 19 January 1952.

<sup>70</sup> *Courier-Mail* 12 January 1952.

<sup>71</sup> Clark, Colin. 'Rejoinder by Colin Clark', *New Commonwealth* (London) 13 May 1954.

Relations between the two men remained chilly for the rest of their long lives. Clark excoriated the policies of state and federal governments on irrigation works in an article in the journal *New Commonwealth*:

*Having got the country into a mess, as on other occasions, the politicians' next move is to put out a smoke-screen. And what will serve better than grandiose but quite unworkable schemes for irrigation?*<sup>72</sup>

The editor of the journal sent the article to Gair and reported to Clark delightedly:

*After a short, but stunned, interval, he has produced a point by point report ... As an editor, of course, I am delighted that we have drawn blood and we have developed a worthwhile controversy on this important subject.*<sup>73</sup>

Predictably, Gair called some of Clark's statements 'ludicrously false' and the article 'a distorted picture of Queensland Government development policy', citing statistics from various departmental reports to answer Clark's accusations, as the editor said, 'point by point' in his article in the *New Commonwealth* on 13 May 1954.

Many years later, when a senator tried to goad Gair by mentioning Clark's name, Gair diplomatically replied: 'Colin Clark is a world renowned economist.'<sup>74</sup> In 1971, Gair sought Clark's help in the formulation of Democratic Labor Party committee of enquiry into 'the whole structure of the rural economy, which would examine its importance, its role and its function in the Australian economy.' Clark replied to Gair that he did not think he could add to or improve the proposals that Gair had outlined, but two weeks later, offered some suggestions to Senator Jack Kane and expressed cordial hopes of hearing from Kane again. Reading between the lines, the

---

<sup>72</sup> Clark, Colin 'Has Australia Got Water on the Brain?', *New Commonwealth* (London) 18 March 1954.

<sup>73</sup> Roy Lewis to Colin Clark, 21 April 1954. Colin Clark Papers, Box 10, Colin Clark Papers, Fryer Library, University of Queensland. Gair's article, 'Has Colin Clark Got Water on the Brain?' was published in *New Commonwealth* for 13 May 1954.

<sup>74</sup> CPD Senate 24 February 1972 p 225.



correspondence indicates a definite reluctance to deal with Gair, even though nearly twenty years had elapsed since their acrimonious parting.<sup>75</sup> Although the two men were co-religionists, and shared the same antipathy towards Communism, Clark never lost his negative feelings for Gair. In a 1985 seminar paper, Clark described Gair as ‘sincere and upright, but unintelligent.’ One is left with the impression that these were the kindest terms that Clark could muster.<sup>76</sup>

#### **4.4 THE 40 HOUR WEEK**

In the light of later events, it was ironic that Gair was responsible for the introduction of the Labor party policy, and later the legislation, that shortened the working hours of many Queenslanders. The maximum hours for which an employee could be worked were gradually reduced in the first half of the twentieth century. Working hours were standardized at 48 hours in 1916, and reduced to 44 in 1924. It was left to Gair to personally introduce to convention and parliament, and implement as a minister, the last reduction for at least sixty years.<sup>77</sup>

At the 1947 Labor-in-Politics convention it was moved that the Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act be amended to provide for a 40 hour week, but Gair moved that the motion be replaced by the following motion: ‘Having in view the need for employment for all during the post-war period, the government institute the 40-hour week as soon as practicable.’ The motion was carried.

---

<sup>75</sup> V C Gair to Colin Clark 19 March 1971: Colin Clark to V C Gair 23 March 1971: Colin Clark to Jack Kane 8 April 1971. Colin Clark Papers, Box 3, Fryer Library, University of Queensland.

<sup>76</sup> ‘Royal Australian Institute of Public Administration. Queensland Division Seminar: Queensland’s Administrative History. October 26<sup>th</sup> 1985: The Bureau of Industry in Queensland.’ Colin Clark Papers, Box 21A, Fryer Library, University of Queensland.

<sup>77</sup> At the time of writing (2007) most public servants work either 36.25 or 38 hours a week, but some sectors of the public service, such as cleaners, still work a 40 hour week.

At the Convention Gair reassured the unions regarding the legislation needed for the change. There would only need to be a change to one word of the Act, viz, from 44 to 40. The unions would not have to prove to anyone that they deserved the 40 hour week, but the onus was on the employer to prove that the industry in question could not afford the 40 hour week. ‘There is no need for any fear on the part of any delegate in this connection. I believe that the means of effecting this reform is quite simple.’ When another delegate asked Gair if the *Queensland Industrial, Conciliation and Arbitration Act* would be amended accordingly if the Federal Arbitration Court granted the 40 hour week, Gair answered in the affirmative.<sup>78</sup>

But Gair had previously shown himself to be in no hurry to declare a 40 hour week. In February 1946 he had told a Trades and Labour Council deputation that requested the government to legislate for a 40 hour week that:

*[C]onditions were very different from those operating when the 44-hour week was introduced. Today there was the greatest need for increased production, and it was most undesirable that Queensland should be placed in a position, because of a restricted working week, of having to import from other States or other countries ... The ideal course would be for the 40-hour week to be introduced on a national basis, so that the benefit should be enjoyed by workers in all states and no State be at a disadvantage ...*<sup>79</sup>

Trades and Labour Council Secretary, Mick Healy, no friend to Gair,<sup>80</sup> accused him of using his sympathy for the workers’ case for a 40 hour week as a smokescreen for

---

<sup>78</sup> Australian Labor Party. Queensland Branch. *Official record of the Queensland Labor-in-Politics Convention*, 1947, pp 33-34.

<sup>79</sup> *Courier-Mail* 12 February 1946.

<sup>80</sup> Healy’s wife, Connie, told the author in 2006 that the two men clashed heatedly at the Brisbane City Hall during the tallying of the absentee vote in the 1944 state election. Healy saw Gair, said ‘There’s that bastard Gair trying to interfere with the vote’. He took off after him, grabbing him as Gair mounted the platform. There were some words, and Gair disappeared quickly. Both the Healys were members of the Communist Party. Connie Healy, email to author, 9 May 2006.

his real reluctance to introduce it, for fear of offending the large industrial interests whose support the government needed. But the 40 hour week received support from a surprising quarter when J S Kerr, the manager of the Hume Pipe Company, whose employees were already working 40 hours, said that their operations were not jeopardised by it. Kerr recommended that the 40 hour week be granted without opposition, because he believed that this would eliminate the strikes.<sup>81</sup> But the government would not legislate for another seventeen months.

Gair later explained his reluctance to introduce the 40 hour week in early 1946:

*[I]n February 1946, the war had been over for only six months, and the demobilisation of our armed forces had not begun, and industry was still required to make the best use of part-time and female labour... Since 1946 there has been a 10 percent increase in productivity per man hour and that rate continues to increase steadily. It had a major and very important influence on the change of attitude of the government and of members of the party.*<sup>82</sup>

Despite Healy's apprehension, Gair kept his word and introduced the promised legislation. Gair outlined the government's reasoning:

*The government believe[s] that the national economy and the buoyancy of national revenue, the higher level of productivity, the favourable position of the export market and export trade, and the present and prospective prosperity of the nation are favourable to the immediate granting of a standard working week of 40 hours, and that this reform will prove to be in the interests of the community and of industrial contentment and security.*<sup>83</sup>

He was always proud of the measure he had introduced to the party and to the Parliament. Even before he had the chance to bring the legislation in he wrote 'it is

---

<sup>81</sup> *Courier-Mail* 13 February 1946.

<sup>82</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 16 September 1947 p 420.

<sup>83</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 16 September 1947, p 407.

one of the proudest acts of my own political record that the resolution which put the 40 hour week into Labor's platform was actually moved by me.' <sup>84</sup> Once it was on the statute books he continued to defend it, saying in a 1950 radio broadcast in Cairns that the 40 hour week was:

*[O]f immense value from the point of view, both of comfort and health, to people working in the sugar industry, the timber industry and the mining industry, quite apart from the employment in secondary industries situated in towns and to those in commercial life throughout the north ... I maintain that, in North Queensland, it would be criminal to revert to a longer working week than forty hours.* <sup>85</sup>

Gair saw the opposition of the conservative parties to the 40 hour week in terms of a class war, 'a symptom of a more deep-seated antipathy possessed by throwbacks, who look upon man merely as a beast of burden, heaven sent for the profit of the owners of the means of production.'<sup>86</sup> He reacted almost personally to the possibility that a future conservative government would withdraw the legislation: 'Is it any wonder I speak feelingly when I say that I can see an attempt being made to snatch the cup from the worker's lips before he had had much chance of tasting the contents?' <sup>87</sup>

Despite his fears, the legislation was never withdrawn, and within a few years calls for its withdrawal had subsided. The conservative governments that ruled Queensland between 1957 and 1989, mindful of the mother of all electoral backlashes, appear to have never seriously considered increasing hours of work across the board. In a 1971 interview Gair named the 40 hour week as among the 'beneficial acts of legislation' that he introduced as a minister. <sup>88</sup> Eleven years after it was introduced, even his former colleague and now bitter enemy Jack Duggan, noting the claim of the Director

---

<sup>84</sup> Speech notes, handwritten, [1947]. Gair Papers Series 7 Elections Box 7 Folder 60, National Library of Australia.

<sup>85</sup> Typescript, Radio Broadcast over 4CA for 1950 elections. Gair Papers, Series 7 Elections Box 7 Folder 54, National Library of Australia.

of Secondary Industries that productivity had increased 10 percent since 1948, admitted that the measure had worked out well for everybody.<sup>89</sup>

#### 4.5 THE MINISTER FOR HOUSEWIVES

More so than most politicians of his era, Gair was cognizant of the need to attract the votes of women as well as men. Up until the 1960s, participation in Australian politics, and certainly in Queensland state politics, was left almost exclusively up to men. However, Queensland women had been voting in elections since 1905. Given their longer lifespans, it is likely that at most stages of twentieth century Queensland history, there have been more women over 21 than men and thus more female electors who were able to make political decisions, that, courtesy of the secret ballot, could theoretically be made without masculine pressure. In practice, of course, a very significant but indeterminate proportion of women were disinterested in politics, at least up until the 1960s, and most Queensland women took little part in political matters beyond exercising the franchise.<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>86</sup> *Telegraph* 27 February 1952.

<sup>87</sup> Typescript, 1950. Gair Papers, Series 7 Elections Box 7 Folder 58. National Library of Australia.

<sup>88</sup> *Sunday Sun* 26 September 1971.

<sup>89</sup> *Telegraph* 16 September 1958.

<sup>90</sup> As is the case with every general statement, there are significant exceptions. The Queensland Women's Electoral League was in existence from at least 1903, and the Queensland Country Women's Association, though never wholly a political association, was in existence from the 1920s. Many women, including Gair's own mother, were local political activists, and the formidable Emma Miller was prominent in the Brisbane General Strike of 1912. According to Gail Reekie, studies of the Communist Party in Queensland in the 1930s and the popular front in North Queensland in the 1940s 'suggest that women played an important role in left wing political activity.' (Gail Reekie, 'Naming Queensland Women's History: A Bibliographic Essay', in Gail Reekie, ed. *On the edge: women's experiences of Queensland* St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1993.) On the other hand, the interest that some women had in politics was excruciatingly slow in translating to parliamentary representation. Only one woman, Irene Longman (Country Progressive National Party, Bulimba, 1929-1932) was elected to the Queensland Parliament in the first century of its existence. Queensland's first woman in the Commonwealth parliament, Dame Annabelle Rankin, entered the upper chamber in 1947, 46 years after Federation. The Australian Labor Party did not have a female representative in the state parliament until Vi Jordan (Ipswich) in 1966.

This did not prevent reflective politicians such as Vince Gair from occasionally making specific appeals to the distaff component of his electorate. Always interested in the practical issues, Gair found himself in 1946 as a champion of the homemaker in relation to bread supplies. The quality of bread left much to be desired. It was reported that Gair was considering taking action to make bakers brand bread with their names, a thought brought on when someone gave him a loaf with a cockroach embedded in it.<sup>91</sup> On one occasion, the minister himself bought some unsatisfactory half loaves, which were thickly coated over with blue mould a few days after purchase.<sup>92</sup>

The distribution of the commodity also came under Gair's influence. Under the *Bread delivery act* of 1946 bakers were compelled to deliver to households within three miles (4.8 km) of their location. The *Sunday Mail* of 5 January 1947 commented: 'The housewife has been waiting a long time; the new Act gave her an axe and delivered the errant baker into her hands.' Gair also resisted all pressure to fix the minimum price of bread, arguing that 'the public, particularly those on low incomes, should receive the benefit of the initiative and efficiency of a manufacturer who could produce at a lower price.' In the same immediate postwar period, Gair had also consulted with butchers regarding the resumption of meat deliveries, suspended during the war, and broke the ice zoning system, leading to smaller and more competitive zones to facilitate better deliveries of a product that was crucial to homemakers in the days before widespread ownership of refrigerators. Outlining his achievements in one leaflet, Gair was unsubtle in his appeal: 'Mothers and wives ...

---

<sup>91</sup> *Sunday Mail* 5 May 1946.

<sup>92</sup> *Courier-Mail* 30 December 1947.

vote for the man who placed your interests first.’<sup>93</sup> The matter of food deliveries by all traders came under his notice and in March 1947 he issued an ultimatum to them to resume home deliveries of foodstuffs voluntarily or be compelled to do so by legislation. The ultimatum was poorly received, however. Grocers claimed that they had never ceased to deliver, bakers said that they were now compelled to do so, and butchers claimed that delivery services were impossible to implement because of economics and rationing regulations.<sup>94</sup>

On the campaign trail for the 1947 election, Gair made an appeal for electoral support to the homemakers of South Brisbane, citing the recent government response to the meat strike as a reason for support. Sixty years later, his introductory remarks read excruciatingly:

*You, dear madam, as a housewife, with the major portion of your waking hours occupied with the care of your home and your family, must certainly find little time for delving into the finer points of politics.*

*Husbands who complain of this and that, at odd intervals, and where is the husband who does not? – are in a far better position to understand the whys and wherefores of things political, than you with your limited opportunities, and if he does not try to explain at length, do not blame him altogether. Possibly he considers that he is big and strong enough to carry worries on his shoulders.*

Referring to the recent meat strike as ‘this deplorable piece of stupidity and wickedness’, and taking the opportunity to give the Communist Party a kick, Gair reminded ‘dear madam’ that the recent amendments to the *Industrial conciliation and arbitration acts*, particularly the Industrial Court-controlled ballot provisions, were designed to prevent strikes that would potentially inconvenience the homemaker.

---

<sup>93</sup> Untitled leaflet, probably for the 1947 election. Gair Papers, Series 7 Elections Box 7, Folder 52, National Library of Australia.

<sup>94</sup> *Sunday Mail* 23 March 1947.

*The knowledge of the possession of this power, to register approval or otherwise, will be heartening to the man and comforting to the housewife.*

*It was for the peace of mind of the community in general, of which housewives form a large and important part, that this vital amendment was incorporated in the Conciliation and Arbitration Act. The result is that now for you, Madam, for your family and other families, there no longer exists the spectre of Communist inspired violations of Arbitration lurking in the shadows.*<sup>95</sup>

It will never be known how many of the female homemakers of South Brisbane heeded his pleas, but he was easily able to survive the 1947 election, the worst result for Queensland Labor at the state level between 1935 and 1957.

Gair was less adroit in staying out of trouble a few years later, when a homemaker related issue that was about as mundane as could have been conceived caused some angst that many would see as unnecessary. The issue was an appropriate one for a grass roots politician such as Gair. He had had some interest in matters pertaining to bread: now the issue was the price of butter.

By September 1951, when Gair was acting as premier<sup>96</sup>, the dairy industry had been requesting for some time that the price of butter, a commodity whose price was regulated, be increased. Dairy farmers demanded a price increase of five and a half pence (six cents), from two shillings and eightpence (27 cents) to three shillings and a penny-halfpenny (31 cents) a pound (454 grams), but Gair refused to countenance it, insisting that the price remain at the level that the producers saw as unreasonably low. The dairy interests started to send their product interstate by rail. The manager of the Dairy Produce Equalisation Committee commented that producers could get £100

---

<sup>95</sup> 'Home Benefits Reflected in Queensland Arbitration Acts', *Southside News* 18 April 1947.

<sup>96</sup> Hanlon was given six months leave of absence from the office of premier in August 1951. He died on 15 January 1952 before this period had elapsed.



(\$200) more a ton if they sent their butter overseas.<sup>97</sup> There was every evidence that the consumers would be willing to pay a higher price for the product, with one enterprising black marketeer reportedly selling a suitcase full of butter at four shillings (40 cents) a pound in the city in fifteen minutes.<sup>98</sup> There were few illusions as to who the public blamed to the shortage, with one wag heard to remark in a Brisbane café, 'Pass the Gair, please', while pointing at the butter.<sup>99</sup> Even the minister for Agriculture, Harry Collins, was pressing for the price increase to be granted.<sup>100</sup>

Not only did Gair refuse the pleas of the dairy interests, he took legislative action to compel them to continue to supply butter at the price that they had argued was uneconomic. On 2 October the *Primary producers' organisation and marketing Act* was amended, providing that commodity producers had to meet quotas and supply the required total amount to the board. Any of the commodity that was being unlawfully withheld could be seized. The legislation seemed designed to respond to a far wider range of circumstances than just a butter shortage. It covered all twenty-one commodity boards, and made it legal for each board to send officials to enter farms, search for produce, inspect books and seize goods. The *Bulletin* was scathing, running a cartoon of a uniformed and strutting Gair as a 'barnyard Commissar' and commenting sourly: 'Anyone who believes this was an attempt by Queensland 'Labor' to 'get the people butter' would believe in piebald bunyips.'<sup>101</sup> The state member for Fassifern, Alf Muller, who was also chair of the Queensland Butter

---

<sup>97</sup> *Courier-Mail* 26 September 1951.

<sup>98</sup> *Telegraph* 26 September 1951.

<sup>99</sup> *Courier-Mail* 5 October 1951.

<sup>100</sup> *Courier-Mail* 1 October 1951.

<sup>101</sup> *Bulletin* 10 October 1951.

Board, did not mince words either: 'I am disgusted that any government would go to such length when dairymen are slaving day and night to keep their cattle alive.'<sup>102</sup>

Few would have regarded Gair's actions as reasonable, so severe criticism could be expected, but the reaction of the conservative press was hyperbolic. 'The maddest piece of legislation this state has ever had to suffer', thundered the *Courier-Mail* editorial of 3 October. 'It might have been made in Russia ...Gagged through a single chamber this monstrous Bill will become law virtually by government decree.' The *Telegraph* editorial of that afternoon was similarly worded: '[T]his dictatorial measure defies comprehension ...Mr Gair and his colleagues have lost all sense of balance and reason. If they set out deliberately to ruin the dairy industry they could not have conceived a more effective method of doing it ...' The next day in the *Courier-Mail* Gair and armoured bushranger Ned Kelly appeared together in the morning's cartoon.<sup>103</sup>

There was one glaringly obvious factor that Gair had not considered. While the legislation could be useful in acquiring existing stocks of butter to ensure distribution within Queensland, no legislation could compel farmers to produce it if it was uneconomic to do so. As the furore continued, a face-saving way out appeared, and Gair suggested that the dairy industry should apply to the State Prices Commissioner for an increase.<sup>104</sup> Only two days earlier, the *Telegraph* had said, with what many would argue was with some prescience, 'if this move to bludgeon producers into submission is an example of what can be expected from Mr Gair it will be a sorry day

---

<sup>102</sup> *Telegraph* 2 October 1951.

<sup>103</sup> *Courier-Mail* 4 October 1951. Gair and Kelly were both cantankerous Australians of Irish descent who came from large families, who were far more influenced by their mothers than their fathers, and saw many of their self-defending utterances published in the newspapers. These parallels are only vague, but there is one specific coincidence. Gair died on 11 November 1980, exactly one hundred years after Kelly's execution.

<sup>104</sup> *Telegraph* 4 October 1951.

for Queensland if he ever becomes leader of the government’<sup>105</sup> but on 5 October the newspaper commended him on his ‘reasonable and commonsense attitude’, which was ‘a distinct and pleasing contrast to the obstinacy and refusal to face facts that he previously displayed.’

On 16 October the dairymen were awarded their price rise, and butter displays returned to normal. The issue of butter prices died quietly and was forgotten. The episode was not enshrined in standard texts of the period<sup>106</sup>, but it demonstrated the limited nature of Gair’s vision and his capacity for obduracy. On this occasion, the acting premier had at least found a face saving way out, and dexterously moved on. Five and a half years later, as premier, he would not be so astute.

---

<sup>105</sup> *Telegraph* 3 October 1951.

<sup>106</sup> Lack, *Three decades of Queensland political history, 1929-1960*, pp 377-378, has a fairly bland account of the 1951 amendments to the *Primary producers’ organisation and marketing act* but gives nothing of the background. Diana Shogren’s chapter, ‘Agriculture 1932-1957’, in Murphy, D J, R B Joyce and C A Hughes, eds. *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland 1915-1957*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980, does not mention it, probably a sound editorial decision given the short duration of the crisis.

**CHAPTER FIVE: GAIR AND THE PEOPLE, 1952 – 1957.**

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Vincent Clair Gair was premier of Queensland from 17 January 1952 to 12 August 1957. He came into office under unusual circumstances. Hanlon was the first Queensland premier to die in office since T J Byrnes in 1898: only one, Jack Pizzey in 1968, would do so in the next half century. He departed under sensational circumstances, and the nature of his departure overshadows the fact that Gair, electorally, was one of the most popular Labor premiers. His victory of 1953 and his subsequent triumph in 1956 (where Labor only lost one marginal seat) were not surpassed by Labor in terms of seat numbers until the Goss victories of 1989 and 1992 and in terms of seat proportions until the Beattie victory of 2001. In voting percentages, Gair's 1953 victory was the best result for Labor since 1935. Yet the opprobrium that surrounded his apostasy in his final years as Labor premier and the two decades of his political career that followed removed him forever from consideration as one of Labor's great leaders.

As Brian Costar has noted, Gair's premiership falls into two equal chronological parts, with the first three years being quiet ones.<sup>107</sup> This chapter will examine these quiet years, and the quiet aspects of the later ones. Gair's legislative record and other, less controversial aspects of his years as premier will be examined. Events leading up to and encompassing his fateful dispute with the central executive of the Labor party will be discussed in the next two chapters.

---

<sup>107</sup> Brian Costar, 'Vincent Clair Gair: Labor's Loser', in *The premiers of Queensland* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, pp 272-273.

It is necessary to exercise selectivity in discussing Gair's activities as premier even in a work of this size. Not all aspects can be comprehensively covered, even in a biography of Gair: he was, after all, only premier for five of his seventy-nine years. However, it is possible to draw some conclusions by examining some of the more important, or representative facets of his career at this time.

Premiers are expected to follow many careers simultaneously, and three important ones are those of administrator, parliamentarian and political candidate. Gair's abilities, deficiencies and performances in these areas are outlined.

A central overall concern for all governments is the economy and the budget. In Queensland's case, this has always been linked with resource development, and, since 1901, almost always with relations with the Federal government. In Gair's case, the four mesh into one, and the subject is treated in full.

As premier Gair was responsible for comparatively little legislation, although of course he acted as co-ordinator of a Cabinet which included ten other ministers. There is not space to expand upon Gair's interest, activities and influence in all ten portfolios, but and the extent of this can only be conjectured in the absence of Cabinet minutes. Still, it can be inferred that as a somewhat assertive, though not dictatorial premier (the evidence for this will be outlined later), there is reasonable correlation between the policy and actions of his government and his own personal and political viewpoints. Some portfolio areas offer little ground for research into Gair's attitudes. Examples of these are transport, and the treasury, both run by strong and capable ministers, Jack Duggan and Ted Walsh respectively. In other portfolios, such as

agriculture and that of attorney general, there is little evidence of any Gair interest. Education, however, falls into neither category and has been selected as one area worthy of further study. Run by forgettable ministers, it was the subject of Gair's attention from time to time. It is also particularly representative of the paucity of vision of Gair and his Cabinet.

As well, it is appropriate to pay some attention to the Gair government's encroachment on civil liberties. While it was mild as it was compared to what had gone before and what came later, it was symptomatic of a myopic outlook on the world that Gair so often displayed.

Finally, Gair's relationship with the newly-created Public Relations Bureau is covered, and there is some discussion of the biggest public relations coup in Queensland up to that time – the 1954 Royal Visit. It was probably the most pleasurable occasion in the whole of Gair's long public life. Indeed, it could be argued that the immense (and un-Labor-like) satisfaction that he derived from the occasion was a sign that he was cast in a mould not usual for his party, and a harbinger of stormy and far less pleasurable events to come.

The central thrust of the thesis – Gair's perennial lack of vision and limited outlook – will be borne out by the account of the quieter aspects of his stewardship that this chapter contains.

## 5.2 THE SUCCESSION

Gair had been the acting premier on several occasions, and was such from 30 August 1951, when the Governor authorised Gair to act as premier for six months because of Premier Ned Hanlon's health.<sup>108</sup> Gair generally handled the higher duties adeptly. On one occasion, Hanlon wrote to him from England:

*I want to congratulate you personally on your very evident success in your capacity as the leader of the government in my absence. I have watched the Press very closely, and it has been very pleasant reading to see how well the affairs of the government have been carried out.*<sup>109</sup>

Edward Michael Hanlon, premier of Queensland since 1946, died on 15 January 1952 aged sixty-four. His death was not unexpected, and he reportedly told friends he would die in office, 'with my boots on.'<sup>110</sup> Hanlon had been ill for some months and the press had raised the possibility of the Governor appointing Gair premier had Hanlon not then been able to resume duty.<sup>111</sup>

Gair relished the role of acting premier, to the distaste of some of Hanlon's associates.

Jack Duggan recalled in 1985 how:

*[S]ome people close to Hanlon were not very happy about him. He ... was using the premier's car and so on and I think they thought it was not necessary for him to do that. He was ... assuming the trappings of office before he was appointed to the job.*<sup>112</sup>

The premier's death precipitated a minor constitutional crisis. When Gair officially notified the Governor of Hanlon's death, the Governor decreed that the government

---

<sup>108</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 30 August 1951, p 191.

<sup>109</sup> Hanlon to Gair, 22 November 1948. Gair Papers, Series 7 Box 7 Folder 61, National Library of Australia.

<sup>110</sup> *Truth*, 20 January 1952.

<sup>111</sup> *Sunday Mail* 16 December 1951.

<sup>112</sup> Duggan Interview no 9, 3 August 1985, p 12.



had ceased to exist and asked Gair if he could form a new one. Gair consulted Cabinet and received an affirmative answer, although he did not at this stage consult caucus. He and the other Cabinet members were sworn in on 17 January but then it was realised that he had not received the formal endorsement of caucus. Fortunately for him, it was forthcoming on 23 January and there was no need for a leadership ballot, which, had it been held and not gone Gair's way, would have resulted in a constitutional imbroglio.<sup>113</sup>

The conservative press, no friend to Labor, nevertheless gave him a reasonably warm welcome. He told the *Truth* 'I will pursue the Labor Party's policy of making a better and brighter Queensland, and a happier people.'<sup>114</sup> The *Telegraph*, which had not forgotten the butter fiasco, but was willing to give the new man a fresh start, was amazingly forgiving, noting that as acting premier:

*[H]e has made mistakes but they have been the mistakes of inexperience and not the result of any deficiency in character. More importantly, Mr Gair has at all times demonstrated that he has the interests of the State sincerely at heart.*<sup>115</sup>

The *Truth* praised him as well, with Dickensian imagery:

*With the Pickwickian rotundity that has come upon him physically in middle age has come also some intellectual sturdiness [and] a thickening of the moral and physical courage that he always had and that even his enemies concede him.*<sup>116</sup>

---

<sup>113</sup> Brian Costar, 'Vincent Clair Gair: Labor's Loser' *The premiers of Queensland*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, p 272.

<sup>114</sup> *Truth* 27 January 1952.

<sup>115</sup> *Telegraph* 24 January 1952.

<sup>116</sup> *Truth* 27 January 1952.

In the face of such praise from conservative sources, it is possible that Gair would not have been overly concerned by the failure of the Trades and Labor Council to congratulate him on his accession to the premiership.<sup>117</sup> Few could doubt that the premiership was a prize he had waited for for a long time. He told a close friend ‘Now I can make my own mistakes, if any.’<sup>118</sup>

The business community tried to make him feel welcome as well. In April, a gathering of 200 Brisbane business identities feted the new premier and lavished praise upon him, with one predicting ‘he may well be the best premier Queensland has ever had’ and another saying that Gair would ‘become a statesman.’<sup>119</sup>

Occasioning some comment in the press was an unusual, edible display on the dinner table. The form was artistic and imaginative, but the food was one that Gair liked and would consume at his most celebrated meal: a make believe pineapple, moulded of tiger prawns.<sup>120</sup>

### **5.3 GAIR AS ADMINISTRATOR**

Even politically opposed commentators concede that Gair at the very least approached the norm of competence as an administrator. Labor historian and party president Denis Murphy conceded that Gair was a capable administrator<sup>121</sup> His deputy, and later bitter political enemy Jack Duggan admitted that his old chief ‘was a good organizer until the closing stages of his term in office.’<sup>122</sup> Former Premier Joh

---

<sup>117</sup> Brian Costar, ‘Vincent Clair Gair: Labor’s Loser’, *The premiers of Queensland* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed p 272.

<sup>118</sup> *Sunday Mail* 10 February 1952.

<sup>119</sup> *Courier-Mail* 8 April 1952.

<sup>120</sup> *Courier-Mail* 9 April 1952.

<sup>121</sup> Murphy, ‘The Split in Queensland’, p 493.

<sup>122</sup> Murphy et al eds, *Labor in power*, p xvi.

Bjelke-Petersen remembered him as ‘a very able man.’<sup>123</sup> Respected political journalist Alan Reid chose to describe Premier Gair in culinary terms: ‘lashings of ability.’<sup>124</sup> Archbishop James Duhig, who in another lifetime had asked the young Vincent Gair to fetch his mitre, wrote to former Prime Minister Frank Forde late in the year that the premier was doing well and had a good team.<sup>125</sup> Virtually the only discordant voice of authority was that of Colin Clark, former economic adviser to the Hanlon and Gair governments provided an alternative, and far more jaundiced view, and blamed Gair for taking Queensland from the highest growth state to the lowest growth state.<sup>126</sup>

Gair was anxious to let his constituency know he was a hard worker. Even as a minister he had declined the offer of a rubber stamp bearing his signature: ‘... as far as I’m concerned, I personally sign all letters.’<sup>127</sup> As premier he was similarly diligent. He claimed years afterwards that while in state parliament he did a lot of work - ‘very willingly executed’ – that should have been done by Federal representatives.<sup>128</sup> As early as August 1952 there was a suggestion that he would increase the size of his Cabinet, or perhaps that he would be relieved of his departmental duties and act as ‘a supreme co-ordinator and as the chief spokesman of the state.’ This suggestion came at a time when an exhausted and run-down Gair was

---

<sup>123</sup> BjelkePetersen, Joh. *Don’t you worry about that: the Joh Bjelke-Petersen memoirs*, North Ryde, NSW: Collins/Angus and Robertson, 1990, p 51.

<sup>124</sup> *Sunday Telegraph* 30 September 1956.

<sup>125</sup> T P Boland, *James Duhig*, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1986, p 352.

<sup>126</sup> Chilla Bulbeck, ‘Colin Clark and the Greening of Queensland: the influence of a senior public servant on Queensland development, 1938 to 1952’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol 33 no 1, 1987. Clark’s views on Gair have been discussed in the previous chapter.

<sup>127</sup> QSA A/9893 Labour and Industry, General Correspondence 1946 to 1954. M O’Brien (State President of the ARU) to Gair, 9 September 1948. Queensland State Archives. The annotation cited above is on the letter in Gair’s handwriting.

<sup>128</sup> *CPD* Senate 8 March 1967, p 365.

recuperating at home with a leg infection after a gruelling tour of the State and a battle with the Loans Council.<sup>129</sup>

No new Cabinet post was created, and there were no increases in the ministry numbers during Gair's term. He noted towards the end of it that he did not wish to increase the cost of government. 'My ministers and I are prepared to do our job to the best of our ability. We are not afraid of work.'<sup>130</sup> To cope with his own burgeoning workload, he instead created a new classified position, the post of Assistant Secretary to the premier. He noted at that time, and on other occasions, that being premier made significant incursions into his home and family life. Gair was out of the house most evenings, and on his evenings at home and before going to work in the morning he spent his time reading files.<sup>131</sup> The phone would often ring early in the mornings.

During the valedictory motion at the end of 1953 he ruminated:

*I wonder whether if the callers saw me in the street as I then am, with a beard, unwashed and partly dressed, they would own me. In fact, sometimes I wonder how I succeed in shaving and washing and dressing properly.*<sup>132</sup>

He was always unambiguous in his self-perception of his own worth:

*I should say that if anyone is entitled to a higher salary than anyone else, it is the premier of the State, whoever he may be, for the work he is required to do and the time he is required to spend in doing it. No business executive is required to be at the beck and call of the people as the premier is.*<sup>133</sup>

---

<sup>129</sup> *Courier-Mail* 31 August 1952.

<sup>130</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 18 October 1956, p 957.

<sup>131</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 18 October 1956, p 945.

<sup>132</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 4 December 1953, p 1734.

<sup>133</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 4 December 1953, p 1734.

Even after leaving the premier's chair, his feelings on the financial worth of the office were the same. In 1958 he argued against salary increases for judges because the increase would lead to judges receiving higher salaries than the premier:

*The hours of work of judges cannot be compared with those of a premier. A premier is kept busy from early morning until the last thing at night, every day of the week ... Apart from the hours of work, they have not the multifarious problems of a premier, and are not subject to the same measure of attack or criticism from the press.*<sup>134</sup>

Cabinet was run along simple, pragmatic guidelines, even if the procedures - or lack of same - sometimes led to administrative confusion, and difficulties in determining what exactly had been decided. Cabinet submissions were not circulated before meetings, and because there was no Cabinet secretariat, no minutes were kept and there was no record of Cabinet decisions.<sup>135</sup> Instead, Cabinet ministers might bring the file concerning the matter being discussed and have the decision noted on the file. Sometimes a press release proclaiming a Cabinet decision would be issued, but Cabinet deliberations mostly went unrevealed.<sup>136</sup>

Gair chaired the Cabinet meetings, raising first any important or urgent matters relating to any department. Other ministers would then raise matters relating to their own departments. Decisions were taken by a simple majority of votes. Sometimes Gair would consult with treasurer Ted Walsh and Arthur Jones, minister for labour and industry, an amiable former gun shearer and 'masterly raconteur of jest, anecdote

---

<sup>134</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 12 March 1958, p 1835.

<sup>135</sup> Cotterell, Barry A 'The Machinery of Government', in Denis Murphy et al, eds. *Labor in power: the Labor party and governments in Queensland 1915-1957*, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980, pp 92-93.

<sup>136</sup> Frank Mines, *Gair*, p 43.

and witty retort' on matters of importance.<sup>137</sup> Early in his premiership, the *Courier-Mail* noted that his managerial style depended on a certain amount of reliance on the capabilities of his ministers:

*His smooth assumption of over-riding authority in the government has been reflected in his insistence that Cabinet ministers must carry the responsibilities of their own departments. The premier has made it clear that ministers must leave nothing to him unless major government policy is involved.*<sup>138</sup>

#### 5.4 GAIR THE AUTHORITARIAN?

Many factors have collectively forged the political conditions that have predisposed Queenslanders towards strong, if not authoritarian leadership in the twentieth century.

In recent times, Paul Williams cited, as contributing factors:

*Less secondary industry, and a concomitant absence of a large middle class, lower than average levels of education, fewer migrants, a lack of media diversity, a unicameral legislature, and a decentralised economy and population from which rural and regional political emphases emerge.*<sup>139</sup>

In the absence of detailed records of Cabinet deliberations it is difficult to assess the degree of authoritarianism Gair exerted within his Cabinet. Much later it was said of Gair that 'In the traditional Queensland Labor style he ruled the party, the caucus and the parliament with a rod of iron'<sup>140</sup> but I have discovered no evidence of Gair overruling a Cabinet majority. This would place Gair somewhat outside the traditional authoritarian mould that has marked the more significant Queensland premiers of all political stripes.

---

<sup>137</sup> Frank Mines, *Gair*, p 43; Lack, *Three decades of Queensland political history 1929-1960*, p 635.

<sup>138</sup> *Sunday Mail* 10 February 1952.

<sup>139</sup> Paul D Williams, 'Metapopulism: Peter Beattie and the Reinvention of Queensland Populist Discourse', paper presented at Australian Political Studies Association, 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference, [http://www.auspsa.anu.edu/proceedings/2001/Australian\\_Political\\_Papers\\_W-Z.htm](http://www.auspsa.anu.edu/proceedings/2001/Australian_Political_Papers_W-Z.htm), accessed 4 May 2006.

<sup>140</sup> T P Boland, *James Duhig*, p 359.

Gair himself replied to accusations of authoritarianism thus:

*I have never played or attempted to play the role of a dictator. Such an abuse of power is not only entirely foreign to my nature and my Labor background. It is also physically impossible under the system of joint Cabinet responsibility, which is the keystone of democratic government.* <sup>141</sup>

In a press interview a few years previously, Gair had been realistic about the issues involved with controlling Cabinet and caucus:

*You have a very large party of heterogeneous types in this business. You don't have a gaggle of geese, but neither do you have a group of geniuses. You can't get a group of 30 or 40 adult men to agree all the time: and you wouldn't get very far if you had a full collection of yes-men. Naturally any thinking man may find it irksome to knuckle down to a majority view – and that's where he has to be disciplined, as a matter of party politics. You even have to be ruthless, perhaps.* <sup>142</sup>

During the 1957 election campaign, the one Cabinet minister not to support Gair on the three week's leave issue, Jack Duggan, accused Gair of dictatorial ways in Cabinet, but his claims ring far more of election rhetoric than conviction. Indeed, by his own account, Duggan had often defended Gair in Cabinet. Shortly after the party split he claimed in Parliament:

*Ministers have come and congratulated me on my speeches in Caucus in defence of the premier. Members on this side have told me: 'Why don't you pipe down; you make better speeches for the premier than he does for himself.'* <sup>143</sup>

As late as 23 April, the day before Gair's expulsion, Duggan signed a document (see Appendix) stating that: 'at no time or on any matter, has the premier done other than execute the decisions arrived at by Cabinet' and that 'Cabinet regards as a matter of

---

<sup>141</sup> *Truth* 19 May 1957.

<sup>142</sup> *Truth* 20 November 1953.

<sup>143</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 11 June 1957, p 51.

utmost gravity the attempt being made [by the Queensland Central Executive of the Labor Party] to impose on the premier responsibility for decisions to which we individually and jointly subscribed, and to which we adhere.’ When Duggan made his accusations, Gair wanted to know why, if he, Gair, was a dictator, Duggan had not raised the matter earlier. <sup>144</sup> ‘If by calling me a megalomaniac, Mr Duggan means that I refused to pervert the responsibilities of my office as premier and my obligations as First Minister of the State’s democratic Parliamentary government to the dictates of dubious outside influences – then I plead guilty!’ <sup>145</sup>

Gair’s lack of outright domination of Cabinet may have been because as the member, albeit the leading one, of a like-minded team that was rather calcified in outlook, he never felt the need to unduly exert his seniority or authority. Remarkably, he was never even required to face a caucus ballot while premier, largely because of his electoral popularity. He was re-elected as Parliamentary Labor Party leader by acclamation after the 1953 and 1956 elections. It is extremely likely that Gair’s prestige within the party obviated any real need for him to be dictatorial in Cabinet or caucus. Nine of his ten ministers and half the backbench followed him out of the Australian Labor Party in the crisis of 1957. Some seem to have gone reluctantly, and some took some time to make up their minds to follow, but all had a choice. <sup>146</sup> Few Australian political leaders could lay claim to such loyalty.

---

<sup>144</sup> *Telegraph* 15 May 1957. This document is dealt with more fully in Chapter 7.

<sup>145</sup> *Telegraph* 12 June 1957.

<sup>146</sup> On the day of his expulsion, the *Courier-Mail* reported that Gair’s level of support in Cabinet had ‘shocked’ his enemies, who thought that only about five Cabinet ministers would follow him out of the party. *Courier-Mail* 24 April 1957.



## 5.5 GAIR AND THE ELECTORATE

As previously noted, Gair's electoral popularity up to the time of the Labor split is often overlooked. Labor performed well in the election of 1950, but did not outpoll the conservatives, who were disadvantaged by the electoral malapportionment arising out of the *Electoral Districts Act of 1949*. This infamous piece of legislation, ostensibly aimed at assigning artificial weightages to those in remote rural areas (which, unsurprisingly, all favoured the Labor party) to compensate for their isolation made a conservative victory almost impossible. But it does not explain the vast swing to Gair at the next election of 1953, a swing which he almost maintained in 1956.

The swing to the Gair-led Labor government can be explained by several factors. These include the Labor party's entrenchment in office, the unpopularity of the Federal coalition government, the indolence of the Labor party's poorly-organised opponents, and good economic conditions all around. Gair also took few risks at election times, and showed a certain adroitness in avoiding difficult issues.

By 1953, the Labor party was firmly entrenched in office, having spent all but three of the previous 38 years on the government benches. The Australian Workers Union gave the party support during election campaigns, notably in the form of transport in the north and west, and AWU offices served as bases for organisation in country areas. In 1947 Ted Walsh had noted at the Labor-in-Politics Convention how the AWU had made 'substantial contributions apart from capitation fees towards assisting the campaign of the Labor Party not only in the State but in the Federal arena.'<sup>147</sup> The

---

<sup>147</sup> Joy Guyatt, 'The Affiliation of Unions: A Study of Four Unions, 1947-57', in *Labor in power*, p 465.

*Courier-Mail* noted on 1 February 1953: 'Labor's political machine functions very smoothly – more importantly, it functions all the time.'

The attested to defeatism, indolence and poor organisation of the Country Party probably also contributed to Gair's easy re-election. Opposition leader Nicklin was himself a hard worker, speaking on nearly every bill as it came before the House. Tom Hiley, Liberal party leader from 1948 to 1954, claimed Nicklin was obliged to work hard because of the indolence of his Country Party colleagues who seemed reconciled to the idea of remaining permanently in opposition and preferred to look after the needs of their own electorates rather than concerning themselves with wider issues.<sup>148</sup>

The famed 'hip pocket nerve' probably played a prominent part as well. The Gair government maintained high real wages through its control of prices. Monetary wages were well below the national averages, but according to the Labor Reports of the period, real wages, adjusted for prices, remained the highest in Australia.<sup>149</sup> By some measures, the economic times were extremely good indeed: in September 1953 deputy premier Jack Duggan claimed that the figures of national income for the financial year 1951-1952, showed a 50 percent increase in real income since 1938-1939.<sup>150</sup>

The extremely quiet campaign, 'one of the quietest on record', according to political journalist Clem Lack, probably did not hurt either.<sup>151</sup> Indeed, it was said that the lack of ideological difference between the two parties gave the public a choice between

---

<sup>148</sup> Author's interview with Sir Thomas Hiley, Tewantin, 11 February 1985.

<sup>149</sup> Murphy, 'The Split in Queensland', p 491.

<sup>150</sup> *Courier-Mail* 9 September 1953.

<sup>151</sup> Lack, *Three decades of Queensland political history 1929-1960*, p 390.

two rival teams of administrators.<sup>152</sup> A lack of real issues and difference would presumably favour the incumbent in such a situation, but Gair made the most of it. Even the avowedly anti-Labor *Courier-Mail* commented in its editorial of 9 March 1953 that 'He conducted with dignity a campaign that was commendably free from bitterness and personalities.'

But Gair had shown characteristic craftiness in avoiding at least one big issue during the election campaign. On 25 September 1952, a Royal Commission on off course racetrack betting recommended the licensing of betting shops everywhere except for the one hundred miles around Brisbane and the twenty-five miles around Rockhampton. The report was shelved, but on 5 February 1953 Gair announced a Cabinet decision whereby, subject to the party convention set down for March in Rockhampton, electors in the four political zones could decide for themselves if they wanted legalised betting shops. By deferring a decision, Gair had stepped around a potential electoral land mine. The *Courier-Mail* of 6 February termed his action 'a master stroke'. The Opposition, led by teetotaler and non-gambler Frank Nicklin, announced its opposition to legalised SP (starting-price) betting and the influential Queensland Council of Churches and the Temperance League threatened to work for Labor's defeat if off course betting shops were legalised.<sup>153</sup> Gair did not mention SP betting or a referendum on the issue in his policy speech of 16 February: he simply did not need to.

On election day the swing to Labor was over six percent, and the party gained seven seats. The gains were remarkable for a longterm government. Two of the seats were in

---

<sup>152</sup> T C Truman, 'The Pressure Groups, Parties and Politics of the Australian Labor Movement', Master of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1957, pp 81-82.

<sup>153</sup> Lack, *Three decades of Queensland political history 1929-1960*, p 389.

Brisbane (Norman and Sandgate), where the spread of industry into Brisbane, accompanied by an influx of the blue-collar population, altered voting patterns. Three were in mining, grazing and sugar areas where Labor was doing well, Roma and, in Far North Queensland, Cook and Mulgrave. Two were in small farm areas in the southeast where Labor could only win in very good years for the party indeed - Condamine and Somerset.<sup>154</sup> There were swings to Labor in all seats except three, Mundingburra, Burdekin and Maryborough.<sup>155</sup>

Gair's own comments on his victory were, considering the magnitude of the achievement, bland and banal:

*I think the people of Queensland have appreciated the government's genuine attempts to do something for the State's progress. Queensland is hungry for development and the people have approved our straightforward policy to do the job.*<sup>156</sup>

Gair also dodged what would have been an extremely difficult election issue in 1956. On 1 January of that year, a shearers' strike commenced, precipitated by a ten percent decrease in the shearing rate which was implemented on that date. The strike will be discussed more fully next chapter, but in the context of this one, it needs to be mentioned that involvement in the strike was something that Gair 'adroitly avoided, realising the danger of public resentment during an election year.' The unions spared

---

<sup>154</sup> Colin A Hughes, 'Labor in the Electorates', in Murphy, et al eds *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland*, p 68; Clem Lack, *Three decades of Queensland political history 1929-1960*, p 390. Hughes is in error, however, when he states that Labor gained the metropolitan seat of Kedron at the 1953 election: it had already fallen to the party in a by-election on 14 April 1951.

<sup>155</sup> Mundingburra and Burdekin were held by well known local independents, both of whom would prove to be extremely durable. Mundingburra's Tom Aikens was finally defeated in 1977 after significant boundary changes, and Burdekin's Arthur Coburn was undefeated when he retired in 1969. In 1953 the conservatives did not contest Maryborough, which Labor had held since 1915 and would hold until 1971, but the seat was contested by the Mayor of the town, who halved the Labor incumbent's majority, something which a coalition candidate in Maryborough probably could not have done.

<sup>156</sup> *Maryborough Chronicle* 9 March 1953.

no effort to get Gair re-elected, despite growing discontent with his government. But the temporary closing of Labor ranks around its parliamentary leader lasted only as long as it took for the government to return to the treasury benches.<sup>157</sup>

Gair's policy speech for the 1956 election – delivered on 24 April, one year to the day before his party would expel him - showed symptoms of a government that was either coasting, rather short of new ideas, or both. No one was moved enough to interject in the seventy-three minutes he took to deliver it. The few new ideas were minor: financial assistance to supplement Commonwealth education scholarships, free legal bureaus at country centres in public curator offices, moves for uniform Commonwealth powers over hire purchase, the strengthening of the Industrial Court and, in a direct swipe from the Opposition, the imposition of heavier penalties for car theft.<sup>158</sup> 'It is obvious that the well of Labor ideas has now run completely dry', commented Opposition leader Nicklin, who added dryly that the car theft penalties were:

*[E]vidently considered by Labor to be of the utmost importance to the development of Queensland as a whole. Perhaps it would have been better if Labor had first read the existing penalties of the Criminal Code and considered heavier penalties on its party for stealing Opposition ideas.*<sup>159</sup>

Gair took few chances in the campaign, and during country meetings 'spoke quietly to his audiences', making sure that they knew that his government stood for a broad cross section of the population. According to one report, Gair said 'that as a government representing all sections, Labor made sure that the factory worker had the

---

<sup>157</sup> Anne McMurchy, 'The Pastoral Strike of 1956', in ed. The big strikes: Queensland 1889-1965. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1983, pp 260-261.

<sup>158</sup> *Courier-Mail* 25 April 1956.

<sup>159</sup> *Courier-Mail* 26 April 1956.

purchasing power to buy what the man on the land produced.’ The government put some effort in retaining the marginals, with Condamine and Somerset, gains from the high water mark of 1953, cited as electorates into which money for public works and buildings had been poured.<sup>160</sup> Gair’s government lost only one seat in 1956, the central west seat of Mackenzie. But his enormous majorities of 1953 and 1956 had within them seeds of his own political destruction. His undoubted popularity with the people steeled his resolve to fight his enemies in the party to the bitter end, rather than seeking compromise. But had his victories been smaller, it might have been better for his own political career, and for his place in history.<sup>161</sup>

## 5.6 GAIR AND EDUCATION

Education was never among the high priorities of the Gair government, despite public indications and assurances to the contrary.<sup>162</sup> The portfolio was ranked low in the Cabinet, seventh out of a possible eleven before the 1953 election (in which education was an issue), but dropped to tenth after the resounding Labor victory. Throughout Gair’s term in office he and the ministers were beleaguered by problems relating to teacher shortages and accusations of niggardliness in the funding of schools.

Queensland Labor had a long history of placing little importance on education.

Successive governments responded slowly to outside changes in education systems, and there was little in the state system that was distinctively Labor or Queensland.

Opposition member Jack Pizzey, later minister for education himself, listed Labor’s

---

<sup>160</sup> *Courier-Mail* 30 April 1956.

<sup>161</sup> D J Murphy, ‘The Split in Queensland’, in Murphy, et al, eds, *Labor in power*, p 494.

<sup>162</sup> In Gair’s policy speech for the election of 1956 he mentioned that the number of students at the Teacher’s College had increased from 344 in 1952 to 941 in 1955, and that for the first time in Queensland’s educational history more students were attending state secondary schools than non-state secondary schools. *Courier-Mail* 25 April 1956.

shortcomings in Parliament in 1951, the year before Gair became Premier. Even after more than a generation of almost unbroken power, Labor governments had not raised the school leaving age, limited secondary education almost exclusively to those who passed the scholarship examination (held at the conclusion of the eighth year of primary school), did not consolidate small schools and were not sufficiently engaging parents in the education system.<sup>163</sup>

Pizzey also commented that the government had also failed to build a proper teacher's training college. Queensland was the only place in the British Empire/Commonwealth that did not have one, despite Cabinet approval in June 1945 for alterations to the North Brisbane Intermediate school building to make it more adequate as a Teachers' College. So neglected were the campus grounds, however, that in early 1956 the Queensland Teachers Union reported that students had purchased the materials for a cement path from the footpath to the main doorway and laid the path themselves.<sup>164</sup>

Other government shortcomings attracted ire from the union and other sources. It was never suggested that the government was terribly interested in what would today be termed capacity building, that is, measures such as the implementation of new methods of training both teachers and pupils, enhancements to the curriculum and other means aimed at ensuring that the final product, a pupil of school leaving age, was educated to their full potential, or capacity. Education administrators, frustrated by the incomprehension and inertia of Labor politicians towards modern educational

---

<sup>163</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 28 August 1951, pp 1034-1035.

<sup>164</sup> *Queensland Teacher's Journal*, February 1956, p 4.

ideas, were hamstrung in their efforts to revise the primary curriculum and to have secondary education provided to all young Queenslanders.<sup>165</sup>

George Devries, former AWU organiser and minister for education from 1950 to 1956, and thus in charge for most of the Gair government, stated his attitude towards education explicitly shortly before becoming minister: 'A man in the university with scholastic attainments has never been able to apply commonsense and commonsense was what is needed in the Australian Workers Union.'<sup>166</sup>

To be fair to Gair and his men, exigencies of the times meant that education would be a harder portfolio to administer in the early 1950s than any other time during Labor's long Queensland stewardship. The war created a teacher shortage, with educators taking their place in the military along with members of other occupations. At war's end, many chose to return to one of the many other vocations that, buoyed by Australia's extremely favourable postwar economic climate, paid better than teaching. The increasing birthrate associated with the earliest of the 'baby boomers' exacerbated the situation, underlining the shortage of teachers when these children reached school age in the early 1950s.<sup>167</sup>

Almost every educational statistic associated with education shows rapid growth during Gair's term. Secondary school enrolments trebled between 1950 and 1957.<sup>168</sup>

In the same period, state school enrolments went from 164 803 to 214 626 and

---

<sup>165</sup> J R Lawry, 'Education', in Murphy, et al, eds, *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland 1915-57*, p 363.

<sup>166</sup> *Courier-Mail* 21 April 1949, cited in Lawry 'Education', p 359.

<sup>167</sup> E R Wyeth. *Education in Queensland*. Melbourne, Australian Council for Educational Research, 1955, p 200.

<sup>168</sup> Hector Holthouse. *Looking back: the first 150 years of Queensland schools*. Brisbane: Department of Education, 1975, p 156. Holthouse gives the figure 5 130 for 1950 and 15 444 for 1957.



enrolments at other types of schools went from 43 329 to 63 510, and teacher numbers went from 5 739 to 7 637. This increase roughly corresponded with the increase in the number of pupils, despite heavy criticism of the Gair government from the Queensland Teachers Union and other sources about teacher shortages. (This will be discussed elsewhere in this section.) Spending on education increased dramatically in the later Hanlon and Gair years, from £4.6 million to £11.9 million, but there appears to have been little comment, or attempt to gain political capital from the funding increase.<sup>169</sup>

Gair got himself off to a poor start with the Queensland Teachers Union. The Director-General of Education retired on the last day of 1951. His replacement was named on 17 January, two days after Hanlon's death. There were two suitable Regional Directors that could have filled the position adequately, but the job went to the far less administratively experienced Herbert Watkin, headmaster of the already somewhat favoured Brisbane State High School in Gair's electorate: when he heard the news, the former Director-General is said to have remarked: 'What a triumph for mediocrity.'<sup>170</sup>

Relations did not improve when in March 1952 Gair promised to legislate for long service leave for Queensland workers, but took some time to decide if public servants and teachers would be eligible, although the government intention to compel private sector employers to give their workers long service leave was never in question. Yet

---

<sup>169</sup> Lawry, 'Education', in Murphy, et al, *Labor in power*, p 364.

<sup>170</sup> Geoffrey Swan. 'The Last God Director General? A Triumph for Mediocrity? Herbert George Watkin (1898-1966) : Director General of Education, Queensland 1952-1964.' Unpublished paper, presented at the Australian and New Zealand History of Education Society Annual Conference 2000. Photocopy held by author, also held at Education Queensland, Education History Unit, Coorparoo, Brisbane. I am indebted to Rosemary Mammino for drawing my attention to its existence.

again, Gair's lack of wide-ranging vision was on display. The Queensland Teachers Union accused the government of:

*[F]orcing other employers to give their employees what it will not give to its own, shedding crocodile tears [all] the while as it prates of the necessity for employers - but not itself, of course - to reward long and faithful service.*

After receiving a deputation from the two public service unions and the Queensland Teachers Union, Gair assured Parliament that 'it was the government's intention to make the necessary alterations and adjustments to the Public Service Regulations.'<sup>171</sup> Even then, his insistence that public servants and teachers had to demonstrate 'meritorious service' to become eligible offended the unions, who requested that this condition be withdrawn. Gair refused, but later offered the proviso that a teacher whose service had not been 'wholly meritorious' should be eligible for long service leave without penalty.<sup>172</sup>

Gair opened the 1952 Queensland Teachers Union conference, the first premier to do so for many years. Ruth Don, Union President, diplomatically stated that Gair's attendance was 'proof of his personal interest in the progress and advancement of our State education system', but Gair's remarks left delegates with little hope of government largesse. Opening with a witticism combined with a kick at the Federal government, he told the audience 'you will not be required to tolerate me for very long as I am suffering from the only thing I got in Canberra, a cold.' Gair said he had learnt from the other premiers in Canberra that Queensland was actually better off in terms of teacher shortages than the other states, and that he had 'not come here to

---

<sup>171</sup> *Queensland Teacher's Journal* April 1952 p 6.

<sup>172</sup> Andrew Spaul and Martin Sullivan, *A history of the Queensland Teachers Union*, Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989, pp 246-247.

make promises regarding one thing or another. Being the son of a Scot, I am very cautious about making promises.'

To underline the fact that education would not be receiving any unexpected favours in the near future, Gair told the conference:

*Nothing begets support quicker than self-reliance and self-help. Governments, as well as all other organisations, become utterly tired of being appealed to by people, either as individuals or as sections, for every little thing they require.*

In the face of remarks such as this, the mover of the vote of thanks to the premier, Union Vice President Charles Wombold may not have been terribly sanguine when he said:

*In years past it appeared as though education was merely coming out of the doldrums but we hope now it will be wafted by the gentle trade winds of national interest to the position that it should occupy in the educational makeup of this State of which we are so proud.*<sup>173</sup>

Teacher shortages were a perennial source of conflict between Gair and the Queensland Teachers Union. In 1952 Education minister Devries appointed a committee consisting of the Director-General of Education, the Directors of Primary, Secondary and Technical Education, the Assistant to the Director of Primary Education, a District Inspector of Schools, the Secretary to the Public Service Commissioner and the President and Secretary of the Queensland Teachers Union to look into the problem. The Committee decided on increased allowances to students training as teachers but the Public Service Commissioner's representative objected, claiming that decisions to implement such measures were the Commissioner's sole prerogative. Although many of the report's recommendations had Cabinet approval,

---

<sup>173</sup> *Queensland Teacher's Journal* May 1952.

the Public Service Commissioner, John McCracken, talked Cabinet into withdrawing its decision because he believed that if these allowances were paid to trainees the relativity between the Education Department and Public Service allowances might be disturbed. The union journal remarked, both in anger and in sorrow:

*And so the Report of the Committee with its recommendations is to be blighted by the dead hand of a Public Service Commissioner who is more concerned that his relativity should remain sacrosanct than he is with the problem of the supply of teachers.*<sup>174</sup>

The decision to bow to the wishes of the Public Service Commissioner showed little evidence of forward planning for the future of Queensland education. Although the committee came up with proposals that were positive and negative, in the words of the *Queensland Teacher's Journal* editorial: 'All that Cabinet did was to implement two negative proposals and ignore all the positive proposals. It cut the period of training for teachers. It debarred over ten thousand children from attending school.' The journal argued that the short period of training that would send unfledged young men and women 'out into the backblocks' would keep the resignation rate among young teachers high and, in the long run, be worthless. Wages were not an attraction either, with the editorial writer showing from an advertisement that typists educated to Junior (Year 10) standard could potentially be earning more than teachers at the age of nineteen.<sup>175</sup>

Teacher shortages were only one reason for teacher dissatisfaction, as shown by a remarkable message to Gair, published in the *Queensland teachers journal* for March

---

<sup>174</sup> *Queensland Teacher's Journal* October 1952, pp 1-2.

<sup>175</sup> *Queensland Teacher's Journal* July 1954.

1953. Fully titled 'An Open Letter to the Premier of Queensland Concerning the Disgraceful Condition of the State Schools of Queensland', the document was in response to Gair's uncharacteristically naive election eve declaration at the Catholic school Villanova, in Coorparoo, Brisbane, that 'if it were not for the Church, the State government would be unable to cope with the public's demand for education.' The editorial writer commented: 'That, Mr Premier, is a most damning and damaging admission for the head of a government to make. It is an open admission that you and your government are unable to carry out the provisions of The State Education Acts.'

If Gair was grateful to the Catholic Church for relieving some of the financial pressure on his government, he did not express it by assisting Catholic education. In mid-1955 Opposition leader Frank Nicklin claimed Labor members had entered a secret pact before the 1953 election to give public support to Catholic schools. The Archbishop of Brisbane, James Duhig denied the charge.<sup>176</sup> Duhig's biographer, Tom Boland, commented wryly of the accused Labor members: 'If they had [entered a pact], they showed little sign of honouring their pledges.'<sup>177</sup> According to Boland, Gair complained in private that Labor would have been able to be of more assistance to church education had Duhig not embarrassed him so often in public by demanding money for his schools. But, Boland continued dryly: 'There would have been more substance to Gair's claims if the archbishop actually did so.'<sup>178</sup>

After the comments on Gair's gratitude to the Catholic Church a scathing litany of complaints followed in the union's open letter. The 'mean and pinch penny' ways of the government had:

---

<sup>176</sup> *Catholic Leader* 2 June 1955.

<sup>177</sup> Boland, *James Duhig*, p 358.

<sup>178</sup> Boland, *James Duhig*, p 423.

*[L]ed teachers to be rag and bottle collectors, to be fete organisers, to be bone collectors, but when teachers are forced to buy materials for infant teaching, to buy even chalk out of money raised by such degrading methods simply because there has been crass and unprecedented neglect of State Schools, the Queensland Teachers Union considers the time has come to call a halt.*<sup>179</sup>

Annoyed by the missive, Duhig attacked the *Queensland Teacher's Journal* on 31 March, and did not enhance his popularity with the union by stating that 'offensive attacks on any authority, public or private, are not commendable and ... this is particularly true when such attacks are apt to encourage youth to belittle the very administration that is giving them a free education.'

Gair replied to the open letter on 1 April. Buoyed by a resounding election victory on 7 March, Gair probably felt he could afford to jeer that parts of it reminded him of the policy speech of the Liberal Party Leader, Tom Hiley. The Union reiterated its charges that some schools had not received any annual stock since 1951: the Caloundra State School boasted just one slate: and while the Gair government could find time for dealing with the knotty problem of SP (starting price) betting, 'it cannot get the miserable quota of one copy book per child per year, one drawing book per child per year, into the State or majority schools.'<sup>180</sup>

The problems associated with a lack of sufficient school buildings were exacerbated when the annual report for the department of public works referred to 'the tremendous effort both in the planning and erection of the required [school] accommodation to meet the needs at the commencement of each school year.' The 'tremendous effort'

---

<sup>179</sup> *Queensland Teacher's Journal* March 1953.

<sup>180</sup> *Queensland Teacher's Journal* April 1953, pp 1-2.

boiled down to eight new residences for teachers and 224 new classrooms, nowhere near what was required. Once more, the low level of government spending on education was invoked: it was stated that Queensland spent 11.54 percent of its revenue on education compared with the 26 percent spent by New South Wales.<sup>181</sup>

The government took the hint, and the mid-1950s saw a flurry of building activity, both in terms of new secondary schools and new classrooms for existing primary schools. Three new high schools were built in Brisbane. The *Queensland teachers journal*, in marked contrast to its previous antagonism towards the government, positively beamed at the sudden burst of activity:

*It is a matter for very pleasurable contemplation by all those who are interested in the advancement of education that the State government is taking hold of some of the urgent problems peculiar to the State's education system, and is making attempts to solve them.*<sup>182</sup>

At the 1955 Queensland Teachers Union conference educator Fred Schonell said 1954 and 1955 had been the most progressive years in the six that he had been there.<sup>183</sup>

But the general satisfaction did not last long. It soon became apparent that the general parsimonious attitude of the Gair government was once more coming into play when it came to the construction of schools. 'The plain truth is that the government has built all its new High Schools far too small', the *Queensland Teacher's Journal* declared in its February 1956 editorial. Such action was hard to excuse as the department had a reasonable idea of the enrolments it could expect for at least five years ahead. There was also a suspicion that the sudden explosion of building activity was electoral

---

<sup>181</sup> *Queensland Teacher's Journal* March 1955, pp 1-2.

<sup>182</sup> *Queensland Teacher's Journal* February 1954, p 4.

<sup>183</sup> Spaul and Sullivan, *A history of the Queensland Teachers Union* p 251.

grandstanding on Gair's part. Gair and his ministers were fuelling the suspicion by opening new schools before buildings and classrooms were completed.<sup>184</sup> Gair hit back at the union, comparing their concerns in the lead-in to an election with the paucity of criticism throughout 1954 and 1955.<sup>185</sup>

Whatever Gair's intentions, the opening of new schools, premature and small as they were, did him no electoral harm. Nor did the *Queensland teachers journal* editorial attacking Gair's statements on education in a radio broadcast on 4 March. The editorial showed, using Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics figures, that the Queensland government was spending less on education per head than any other state.<sup>186</sup> Condemning as that statistic could have been under different circumstances, the effect on Gair's political progress was indiscernible.

Gair inherited a jaded education system that was desperately in need of expansion and change, but did not exhibit a focused approach to implementing either. He and his ministers seemed to be content to continue with Labor's distinct lack of vision in education matters. What was achieved was usually done for political reasons. Inaction was a customary response to criticism, although less than appropriate retorts were not uncommon. It must be strongly suspected that electors focused on issues other than education policy when making their collective decisions to twice return the Gair government to power.

---

<sup>184</sup> *Queensland Teacher's Journal* February 1956, p 1: Spaul and Sullivan, *A history of the Queensland Teachers Union*, p 251.

<sup>185</sup> *Courier-Mail* 20 April 1956.

<sup>186</sup> *Queensland Teacher's Journal* March 1956, p 1.



## 5.7 GAIR AND THE ECONOMY, BUDGETING, RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND RELATIONS WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

During the Gair years, the Federal government made a convenient target that also happened to be a non-Labor one. Gair never lost a chance to complain about the niggardly treatment that his state received in the distribution of Federal revenue.

Former Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies was frank in his recollection: 'He was a pain in the neck every time we had a Premiers' Conference.'<sup>187</sup>

Even before becoming premier, Gair referred to the 'deplorable financial policy of the Federal government' and the 'deliberate and contemptuous indifference by the Federal Treasurer [Arthur Fadden] to the pressing needs of local authorities and semi-governmental bodies and resultant curtailment of works in Queensland of a positive defence value.'<sup>188</sup> Fadden came in for some extremely severe censure from the state government. Gair and his cohorts sometimes crossed over the line to criticism that was too personal for Fadden's liking. In Parliament, Gair referred to him as 'an ex-Queenslander'<sup>189</sup> and one who was maintaining 'his reputation as a contortionist and a wilful slanderer.'<sup>190</sup> One Labor pamphlet accusing the Federal government of 'gross neglect to the developmental needs of Queensland', hyperbolically referred to Fadden's 'purblind prejudice', 'his betrayal of solemn election promises', and his 'policy of procrastination and shifty evasion' and his 'hysterically vindictive attacks

---

<sup>187</sup> David McNicoll, *Luck's a fortune: an autobiography*. Sydney, Wildcat Press, p 219.

<sup>188</sup> *Telegraph* 2 January 1952.

<sup>189</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 5 November 1953, p 1051. According to Gair, speaking to a condolence motion for Fadden, the 'ex-Queenslander' gibe hurt Fadden deeply, and he asked Gair not to use the epithet again. Their public differences of opinion, Gair recalled, 'were always concluded by Artie slapping me on the back and saying: 'You little B, come and have a drink.' *CPD*, Senate, 1 May 1973, pp 1144-1145.

<sup>190</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 21 September 1953, p 367.

on the [Queensland] government' which had led to Fadden 'distinguish[ing] himself as the arch renegade of Australian political history'.<sup>191</sup>

It seems beyond dispute that Fadden unintentionally proved to be an electoral asset to Gair, when the effect that he had on the state Country Party's electoral popularity is considered. The 'horror budgets' of the early 1950s alienated even diehard Country Party supporters. The papers of Allan Campbell, Country Party official, contain some hotly worded refusals to donate to party election funds, citing Fadden's policies as the reason.<sup>192</sup> The unpopularity of the Federal Country Party among its natural supporters during this period was at least partially responsible for the state party's woeful electoral performance, and in turn enhanced the performance of the Gair government. Country Party opposition leader Frank Nicklin summed up the problem in his address to the Country Party conference in 1955:

*From the election point of view, it is wholly bad to have a non-Labor Commonwealth government and a Labor state government - the non-Labor party has to take the blame for all the tax impositions and the Labor government gets all the credit for the spending ... the Menzies-Fadden government is the big bad wolf that taxes the hide off the people, while the state Labor government is the benevolent Santa Claus that provides all the goody goodies. Our chance of securing power in this state is Buckley's while such conditions remain with us.*<sup>193</sup>

Whether it was campaign season or not, Labor seized time and again on the unpopularity of the Federal government, at times using what a later age would call 'smoke and mirrors'. To list all examples would be tedious here, but each side was

---

<sup>191</sup> *The forgotten north; Premier Gair exposes Canberra's neglect*, Brisbane: Queensland Central Executive of the Australian Labor Party, 1954.

<sup>192</sup> The Alan Campbell Papers are held at the John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Brisbane.

<sup>193</sup> Country Party *Conference, 1955. Minutes*. I viewed this at Bjelke-Petersen House, Boundary Street, Spring Hill in 1984.

perfectly capable of using omission and distortion to discredit the other by creating a false impression. In May 1956 Fadden accused Gair of complaining about Federal niggardliness and at the same time stashing away £ 26.3 million in trust and special accounts rather than spending it. 'Money intended for state development should not be treated as though it was a black marketeer's illicit gains to be held in a secret drawer in the wardrobe or buried in a kerosene tin in the fowlyard.'<sup>194</sup> As election day 1953 approached, Treasurer Walsh claimed a deficit of over £ 250 000, neglecting to mention £1 000 000 collected from the Federal government for hospital benefits because, as Liberal Treasury spokesperson Tom Hiley claimed, Walsh 'wanted to bolster his attack on the Federal government for starving Queensland.'<sup>195</sup>

The attack was successful. In the lead-in to the election a *Courier-Mail* journalist travelling with Gair said that Labor officials were 'sensing a breeze of resentment against the Menzies-Fadden government.'<sup>196</sup> After the election, Opposition Leader Frank Nicklin blamed his defeat on the emphasis that Gair and his team placed on Federal funding issues with their 'specious propaganda', claiming that 'real State issues were completely overshadowed.' Demographics played a part as well, with Tom Hiley claiming that the establishment of Housing Commission estates had been responsible for massive swings to the Labor party in Brisbane.<sup>197</sup>

Economic pragmatism was a hallmark of the Gair government. Gair would long remain proud of what he considered a commonsense approach to government

---

<sup>194</sup> *Courier-Mail* 2 May 1956.

<sup>195</sup> *Courier-Mail* 13 February 1953.

<sup>196</sup> *Courier-Mail* 28 February 1953.

<sup>197</sup> *Courier-Mail* 9 March 1953.

spending. In 1970, when he had been in the Senate for five years and out of the premiership for well over a decade he recalled his priorities in spending money:

*Outside of what I [was] required to do in relation to the provision of schools, hospitals and other community essentials, I spent the money on these items in this order - water, power and transport, including road transport. You cannot settle people successfully unless they have a guaranteed water supply. Power is indispensable for the successful and efficient conduct of industry, whether it be primary or secondary. Having produced its product the industry must have road and other transport facilities in order to get its product to market.*<sup>198</sup>

For the most part, Gair and his government were favoured by balmy economic times. His first two valedictory speeches, delivered before Parliament rose for the Christmas break, referred to the extremely favourable economic environment. In 1952, he declared:

*We find that all sections of business in Queensland are prosperous and good today; people are in work. One is tied to the other and it is my wish that the state of affairs will obtain [sic] for all time in this State because unemployment is something that no-one envisages without some measure of horror.*<sup>199</sup>

A year later, no doubt buoyed by the greatest election victory he would ever enjoy, he was able to report:

*1953 has been a comparatively good year for Queensland, indeed for Australia. The happiest part of the record for this year would be the fact that our people still enjoy a measure of comparative prosperity.*<sup>200</sup>

Although the economic climate was favourable to the Gair government during its five and a half years in office, the story associated with it is not a simple recounting of an uncomplicated situation. There are several interwoven themes that must be discussed

---

<sup>198</sup> CPD Senate 16 June 1970, p 2467.

<sup>199</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 3 December 1952, p 1719.

<sup>200</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 4 December 1953, p 1731.

both separately and in the context of their relationship with each other when considering the state economic climate during Gair's stewardship. These include the extreme frugality and pragmatic conservatism of the Gair government: the role of development as a key player in the economy: the move from a rural-based economy to one based on industry and the acceleration of this trend, which started in the immediate postwar period, during Gair's administration: the large developmental projects of the day: and the prickly relationship with the Federal government in the matters of finance.

Gair, and close colleague and friend, Treasurer E J 'Ted' Walsh were pragmatic and frugal fiscal conservatives. The leader of the Liberals from 1948 to 1954 and Treasury spokesman for the Country-Liberal Opposition, Sir Thomas Hiley, told the writer in 1985 that Walsh 'worshipped reserves', and was reluctant to draw upon them for any reason. During the Second World War, the Queensland coffers had been extremely favoured by wartime windfalls for the Queensland Railways. Receipts from the transporting of military personnel and materiel throughout Queensland during the war years greatly enhanced railway revenue. In his 1952 valedictory speech Gair defended the 'husbanding of resources in the days of buoyance' claiming the reserves had helped to cushion the blow the Commonwealth cut loan allocations to Queensland. In the other states, unemployment was an issue: in Queensland it was not.<sup>201</sup>

In March 1958, seven months after the defeat of his government, Gair gave a brief account of the twin threads that ran through the fiscal actions of his government: the

---

<sup>201</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 3 December 1952, p 1719.

utilisation of reserves, and the obduracy of the Liberal – Country Party government in Canberra:

*How were successive [state] Labour governments able to hold off the evil of unemployment? It was no thanks to the Menzies-Fadden government ... it was because of the foresight and the vision of men like Frank Cooper and Ned Hanlon whom I had the honour to succeed. They built up reserve funds when revenue was buoyant and when we came back from Loan Council meetings ill-equipped, poorly supplied with money, we had funds to supplement those we got from Canberra to keep jobs in progress and men in work ... When these reserves started to peter out the position became serious, but no-one, not even Cicero himself, could have convinced the political bigots in Canberra that Queensland had a case under a Labour government.*<sup>202</sup>

The Gair government was a frugal one, and at times, it seemed that Gair and his cohorts were overly concerning themselves with cost cutting measures for which the potential benefits were not significant. Nine months before his government fell, the premier of Queensland was calling for, among other stringencies, public service economy in the use of stationery and electricity.<sup>203</sup> Around the same time, the public service lost the minor perk of a half day leave for the Brisbane Exhibition, a privilege that had been theirs since 1880. ‘Queensland was not prosperous in each and every one of those seventy-six years’, the *State Service* fumed. ‘But governments were not so mean with their employees ... the premier has excused his action by referring to the serious economic position and to the excessive overtime. He knows his government is responsible for both.’<sup>204</sup>

‘Sometimes our government was criticised for being too cautious’, Gair recalled a few years later. ‘But the financial situation that characterised our administration was

---

<sup>202</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 4 March 1958, p 1664.

<sup>203</sup> *Courier-Mail* 12 September 1956.

<sup>204</sup> *State Service* (Editorial) August 1956. After the fall of the Gair government, the Nicklin government restored the privilege. See *State Service*, September 1957.

borne, not out of niggardly politics, but of prudence, and at all times the welfare of the people was our prime consideration.’<sup>205</sup> Moreover, it is very likely that what former Deputy Premier Jack Duggan termed 'the depression ethos' in a 1983 interview with the present writer, contributed to the apparent willingness of Treasurer Walsh and his chief Gair, having experienced and survived difficult economic times, to be tightfisted during what were, in retrospect, good economic times. Tom Hiley put on record his belief that some of Gair's men 'had had a really traumatic experience' during the Depression: 'They'd carried their swags, they'd gone from police station to police station to get a miserable hand-out', and were determined never to undergo the same experience again.<sup>206</sup>

But as Hiley also testified, both at the time and much later, the later Labor governments took the opportunity to build up surpluses rather than to finance development and infrastructure. He told the National Library's oral history interviewer Suzanne Walker in 1974:

*They came out of the war with many millions' savings because the Railways were loaded to the gunwales carrying war goods ... the result was they stacked up tremendous surpluses from Railway earnings for the first time in Queensland history, and what do you think they did with it? Bought Commonwealth bonds and put 'em in the old oak chest. And they were still there when I took over.*<sup>207</sup>

---

<sup>205</sup> 'Policy Speech of the Queensland Labor Party Delivered by Hon V C Gair, MLA at Festival Hall, Brisbane 9<sup>th</sup> May, 1960', Gair Papers Series 5, Speeches, articles, broadcasts, Box 6. National Library of Australia.

<sup>206</sup> Sir Thomas Hiley, Interview with Suzanne Walker, p 1:1/32, 1974. National Library of Australia.

<sup>207</sup> Sir Thomas Hiley, Interview with Suzanne Walker, p 1:1/32. In its issue of 25 May 1960 the QLP organ, the *Standard* took Hiley to task, claiming that when he took over there were £3 000 000 'tucked away in readily available reserves', but that now 'Queensland has no readily available reserves as the 1958-59 Auditor-General's report shows.'

Accusing the government of 'bursting out of its clothes' with surplus revenue in September 1954, Liberal treasury spokesman Tom Hiley claimed Walsh had a 'real revenue' surplus of £4.291m at the end of the 1953-1954 financial year although the Treasurer had only disclosed the figure of £342 000, the consolidated revenue surplus, in his Budget speech. According to Hiley:

*Never in Queensland's history has the government had more money available, and never has the Treasurer been so harassed in pushing out in all directions to get rid of the money....the government was starved for energy, initiative, vision, capacity. Its surplus was so great that it could have doubled expenditure on development ... Instead it bought £5.5 million worth of bonds and City real estate.*<sup>208</sup>

Despite what Hiley portrayed as a certain diffidence in spending money on development, Gair and Walsh repeatedly stated their commitment to that perennial theme, a constant in virtually all twentieth century political history in Queensland. In 1971 D J Murphy commented that:

*Development is a word that has a particular romance in Queensland politics, and, next to such telling phrases as 'at this point in time', 'development' would be the political-descriptive term most likely to succeed.*<sup>209</sup>

From the mid 1940s it had been apparent that development would be within the bailiwick of the premier. In 1944 Premier Frank Cooper relinquished the Treasury portfolio saying that the workload of the premier was increasing and that he expected it to increase more after the end of the war with postwar reconstruction. Cooper had judged the situation correctly. After the war the Premier's Department became the focus of major developmental projects. In the decade after the cessation of hostilities,

---

<sup>208</sup> *Courier-Mail* 1 October 1954.

<sup>209</sup> D J Murphy, 'Australian Political Chronicle – Queensland', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* April 1971, p 120.



throughout the stewardships of Ned Hanlon and Vince Gair, the sub-department (of the Premier's Department), the Co-ordinator General of Public Works oversaw the Tully Falls Hydroelectric Scheme, the Blair Athol coalmine and the Peak Downs Scheme.<sup>210</sup>

The crucial nature of the connection between Gair's actions and Queensland development was acknowledged only a few days after Gair's accession in an editorial of the conservative afternoon newspaper, *Telegraph*, which on 18 January said that Gair was taking over at a time when Queensland was beset with many problems related to its future development, and that 'wise, courageous and imaginative leadership' was required:

*First steps in the developmental programme are better transport and harbour facilities, more emphasis on irrigation and water conservation, the extension of electricity undertakings, [and] more positive schemes for land settlement.*

A few weeks after taking over, Gair said in a newspaper article that state government policy of the postwar years had been directed to increasing productive capacity by means of irrigation and water conservation projects, more efficient electrical power, better communications, soil and plant experimentation, reforestation and the expansion of mining.<sup>211</sup> When, in 1970, Gair gave the account of the developmental works carried out by the state government that he led he remarked, with not uncharacteristic pride tinged with acerbity that:

*Not one penny of Commonwealth money was contributed in the form of a grant or loan to any of those projects, notwithstanding definite and public*

---

<sup>210</sup> Joanne Scott, Ross Laurie, Bronwyn Stevens and Patrick Weller, *The engine room of government: the Queensland Premier's Department 1859-200*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 2001, p 10.

<sup>211</sup> *Courier-Mail* 13 February 1952.

*promises by Federal Ministers that the Commonwealth would assist financially.*<sup>212</sup>

The parsimoniousness of Canberra is a perennial cry when state government projects are hindered or postponed by lack of funds, but the situation was particularly acute in Gair's time. His and Treasurer Ted Walsh's relationship with the Federal government, usually of an acrimonious nature and connected to Canberra's perceived overcaution when it came to funding Queensland's developmental projects, was an important factor in the Queensland economic climate.

In the early 1950s the state Labor government in Queensland was highly critical of the Commonwealth's failure to provide funding for the Burdekin, Tully and Tinaroo schemes. In 1980 Wiltshire suggested three possible reasons for the lack of financial support. Firstly, it could have been that for political reasons the Federal Liberal-Country Party coalition favoured non-Labor state governments over Labor state governments. Secondly, the Commonwealth may have felt that the documentation provided by the Queenslanders did not provide adequate enough information on which to base a decision. Thirdly, the Commonwealth might not have wished to give grants money to a state sitting on a pile of reserves that represented their wartime windfall gains. As the 1950s wore on, Labor continued to receive a relatively low amount of Commonwealth money per head, with public works spending being funded increasingly from reserves. In Labor's last budget, before the fall of the Gair government in 1957, a deficit was recorded.<sup>213</sup>

---

<sup>212</sup> CPD Senate 1970 p 273.

<sup>213</sup> Ken Wiltshire, 'Public Finance', in D J Murphy, et al, eds, *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland 1915-57*, pp 175-176.

## 5.8 GAIR THE PARLIAMENTARIAN

Parliament is only one of the venues in which a politician and a premier can test her or his mettle, but it is always enlightening for the biographer to examine the performance of their subject in the parliament. Few biographical subjects leave behind as many public statements as parliamentarians. Despite the semantic and syntactical refinement that the verbatim speeches undergo at the hands of the parliamentary reporters, those speeches, recorded and publicly available almost from the day on which they are made, provide clues to character and suggest avenues for further research to the insightful scholar. For the parliamentarian, long term dissembling for the purpose of the historical record is extremely difficult. In 1921 Charles Bernays, Clerk of Parliament, summed the situation up neatly when he wrote to Lily Ryan, widow of Labor Premier T J Ryan, 'There is hardly any field where one may study human nature with such precise results as in the parliamentary arena.'<sup>214</sup>

Over forty years later, State public relations officer, author and parliamentary historian Clem Lack described Gair as 'a vigorous and forthright debater.'<sup>215</sup> His forthrightness, however, was a little too prominent seven months into his term when he broke with convention and was extremely critical of a departed member during the condolence motion for John Francis 'Bombshell' Barnes, member for Bundaberg from 1941 to 1950.

Barnes had led a controversial career, being suspended from Parliament eight times.

Lack described him as 'a shrewd political showman, with a flair for creating scenes in

---

<sup>214</sup> D J Murphy, *T J Ryan: a political biography*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1975, p 522.

<sup>215</sup> Clem Lack, *Three decades of Queensland political history 1929-1960*, p 630.

the House with the object of having himself suspended, and achieving press publicity.' He entered Parliament as a self-styled 'Andrew Fisher Laborite' but in 1947 changed his allegiance to a single member grouping that he modestly dubbed Frank Barnes Labor. Barnes's combination of exhibitionism and martyr complex came into play on one occasion when he arranged for the police to re-escort him bodily from the Parliament House grounds so a photographer friend was able to replace a defective flash bulb. In November 1949 Barnes, on Gair's motion, was suspended from the service of the House for 14 days.<sup>216</sup>

Barnes died on 12 May 1952, aged only 47. When he spoke on the condolence motion, Gair showed that he had little regard for Frank Barnes the parliamentarian:

*...with all my Christian charity I cannot believe that Mr Barnes could be said to have served any real purpose in this Parliament. I often feared and felt that his conduct had the effect of destroying the prestige of the parliamentary system, which after all is one of the main pedestals of democratic government and democracy.... there is not one of us who can truthfully say that he did not abuse the privileges and rights of parliamentarians in this branch of the democratic system of government.*<sup>217</sup>

Gair concluded with a few bland remarks about his sympathy for the family, but, unusually, Barnes's widow Evelyn refused to accept the condolence motion and asked the independent member for Mundingburra, Tom Aikens, to return it 'in view of the remarks of the premier.'<sup>218</sup> Aikens had taken a dim view of Gair's tactlessness in Parliament as had the member for Nanango, Joh Bjelke-Petersen, who expressed his:

*entire disapproval of what I consider a cowardly attack ... on the former hon member for Bundaberg [who] may have adopted unorthodox methods at times but he had the courage of his convictions and he did a great deal as a member of this House to assert and uphold the principles of freedom.*

---

<sup>216</sup> Clem Lack, *Three decades of Queensland political history 1929-1960*, pp 680-688.

<sup>217</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 19 August 1952, p. 9.

<sup>218</sup> *Courier-Mail* 15 September 1952.

Gair protested that he was referring to Barnes as a parliamentarian, not as a man, but Bjelke-Petersen continued to deplore 'the attack the premier made on a man who is not here and not able to defend himself.' It was not Gair's finest hour in Parliament.<sup>219</sup> Mrs Barnes does not seem to have forgiven easily, if at all: later in the year there was speculation that she would contest Bundaberg as an independent.<sup>220</sup>

He showed better form as a parliamentarian in October 1954 when he implemented an important and beneficial change to parliamentary procedure. On most matters, Gair was a consolidator but on this occasion, he was a reformer. Estimates debates on departments were limited to three allotted days per department (with days being deemed the period from 11 am to 4 pm, or 4 pm to 10 pm, each of these periods being an allotted 'day' even if the debates were held on the same date). There was a good case for the change: in 1952 and 1953 only three departments were discussed and in 1951 only two, the Department of Public Instruction and the Department of Health and Home Affairs, received attention.

The suggestion originated with Opposition leader Frank Nicklin, but Gair 'readily agreed to give the matter consideration.' Nicklin noted that under the new arrangements at least six departments could be discussed, a far better arrangement than previously.<sup>221</sup> Although it was Nicklin's idea, Gair deserves credit for adopting the proposal, and so readily: a marked change from his usual lack of receptivity to new ideas.

---

<sup>219</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 20 August 1952, p 44.

<sup>220</sup> *Sunday Mail* 30 November 1952.

<sup>221</sup> Lack, *Three decades of Queensland political history 1929-1960*, p 418.

Gair also tightened up the operations of Parliament by prohibiting ministers from informally receiving deputations from members while in the Chamber. He had noticed speakers being distracted by conversations between ministers and backbenchers on constituency and other matters.<sup>222</sup>

## **5.9 GAIR, CIVIL LIBERTIES AND CENSORSHIP**

Commentators have long remarked on the restriction of civil liberties in Queensland in comparison to other states. The Gair government was no exception to the rule, but the curtailment was not manifested in the violence that accompanied the railway strike of 1948, the anti-Vietnam demonstrations of the late 1960s, the anti-Springbok demonstrations of the early 1970s and the street march demonstrations of 1977-78. Historical hypothesising can only be carried so far, but it seems more than likely that this was because the occasion for major street demonstrations did not arise during Gair's five years in office. As minister Gair, had, after all, been part of the government that brutally quashed the railway strike, and almost a generation later he strongly supported Australia's involvement in Vietnam. It can only be presumed that Gair approved of the arrests and the severity accompanying the arrests that were associated with demonstrations against the Vietnam War.

Gair would never have seen himself as any sort of an enemy of civil liberties, and on least one occasion he took some pains to imply that he was not. During a minor, in-

---

<sup>222</sup> *Truth* 11 October 1953.

chamber squabble with a Country Party member, Alf Muller, Gair proclaimed to the Parliament:

*I am not the leader of Parliament. I am the leader of the government. Does the hon member want me to lead the Parliament? Does he want me to take full control? ... I do not want to be Fascistic in my control nor do I want to adopt any Nazi attitude or any other -ism.*<sup>223</sup>

Although there was no dramatic manifestation of the curtailment of the civil liberties of Queenslanders by the Gair government, there were at least two ways in which that government's actions had a deleterious effect on the intellectual freedom of the state's citizens. It needs to be stressed that in the absence of Cabinet minutes or a surviving member of the Gair Cabinet, it will never be known for certain how much input the premier had in the decisions to bring in two separate pieces of legislation that would limit the freedom of Queenslanders. Still, it is fair to assume that he wielded enough influence in Cabinet to quash notions that he found intolerable, and that those that passed Cabinet muster were ones that Gair could at least tolerate. In any case, the Westminster doctrine of collective responsibility deems Gair to be responsible for legislation introduced by his government, and its implications.

The first measure that impacted on the intellectual freedom of Queenslanders came in September 1953 with the introduction of the *Printers and Newspapers Bill*. The legislation, introduced by Attorney General Bill Power, gave the government far reaching powers to deal with publications that had no imprint or gave no indication as to their source. No one doubted that the legislation was aimed at prolific pamphleteers that were either critical of the government, or Communist, or both. The bill, and later

---

<sup>223</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 25 November 1953, p 1668.

act, provided for the registration of the proprietor, printer and publisher and even the printing presses on which the publications were produced. Inspectors were to be appointed to administer the act and provisions were made for the issue of warrants to enter premises and search for, seize and retain printing presses. Anyone printing any book or paper for publication was obliged to print their name and address on it, and the sale or distribution of any book or paper printed in Queensland in which this information did not appear was prohibited. Goods seized under the act could be forfeited.<sup>224</sup>

Even humble roneoing machines had to be registered, and at least one body saw the legislation as an illiberal means by which the government was trying to intimidate left-leaning union leaders. The Legion of Ex-Servicemen and Women, to which many unionists belonged and of which Frank Waters, formerly Labor member for the state seat of Kelvin Grove, had been the president, felt that it was being harassed by the police.<sup>225</sup> During the second reading of the bill, Power denied any attempt to stifle the freedom of the press, but declared that the legislation was justified in the face of the existence of pamphlets that were circulated by people who 'were no respecters of persons.' He cited the Communist Party as being in this category.

Opposition Leader Frank Nicklin and deputy coalition leader, Liberal Tom Hiley, were extremely critical of the bill, with Nicklin claiming that it had the potential to be a political weapon in the hands of a government or minister who wished to stifle criticism. Hiley claimed that the bill was lopsided, as the most minor offence could lead to the forfeiture of equipment, and that at the behest of the minister rather than a

---

<sup>224</sup> Clem Lack, *Three decades of Queensland political history 1929-1960*, p 405.

<sup>225</sup> Denis Murphy, 'The 1957 Split', p 492.



court of law. Power conceded the point, and brought in an amendment giving the discretionary power of forfeiture to the adjudicating court instead of vesting in the minister as originally proposed.<sup>226</sup>

The second instance of theoretical curtailment of citizen's liberties also came in the form of legislation, once more introduced by Attorney General Bill Power. The *Objectionable Literature Bill*, which he introduced into Parliament in early 1954, set up a Board of Review to examine and, if necessary, prohibit the circulation in Queensland of any publications that the Board deemed 'objectionable.' The meaning of 'objectionable' covered a wide range of situations, with the word defined as meaning:

*[T]hat it unduly emphasised matters of sex, horror, cruelty or violence, or was blasphemous, indecent, obscene, or likely to be injurious to morality; or was likely to encourage depravity, public disorder, or any indictable offence; or was otherwise calculated to injure the citizens of this state.*<sup>227</sup>

There can be little doubt that Gair strongly supported the legislation. When he opened the Federal Council of the Printing Employee's Union the previous October he had condemned sex and horror publications, describing them as 'debased', an insult to the art of printing, and a scourge on the community.<sup>228</sup>

Community scourges notwithstanding, the *Courier-Mail* of 2 April attacked the government for setting up a means to censor 'adult reading.' In Parliament, Winston Noble, the Liberal member for Yeronga expressed alarm at the 'dagnet' proposals it contained in the notion that something could be deemed 'otherwise injurious' on the

---

<sup>226</sup> Lack, *Three decades of Queensland political history, 1929-1960*, p 406.

<sup>227</sup> Lack, *Three decades of Queensland political history, 1929-1960*, pp 403-404.

<sup>228</sup> *Telegraph* 19 October 1953.

whim of the government. As Opposition Leader Frank Nicklin declared, the notion was indefinable: some people might want to ban racing form guides because they believed gambling was harmful and others might want to ban liquor advertisements because they thought drinking was harmful.<sup>229</sup>

The legislation was passed and the Literature Board of Review came into existence. Unique to Queensland, the Board provided further protection for the morals of Queenslanders by screening and in some cases prohibiting the circulation of publications that had been deemed by its Commonwealth counterpart as suitable for circulation in the other states and territories of Australia. It continued to exercise this function for over a generation.

In the first year of the Board's operation it banned forty-seven publications. Most of the offending items were at the lower end of the literary scale, with love and crime comics prominent on the list. No publisher was informed in advance of the ban, or given the chance to show why it should not be imposed. Presumably with the full approval of the Gair government, the Board stated in its first annual report that its objective was to help 'educationalists' to 'train the young mind in a sincere appreciation of wisdom, moral strength and beauty' while in the second annual report, in amazingly florid language for a government publication, it declared that its aim was to help provide 'an invisible but permanent armour against what the Scriptures call 'the fiery darts of the wicked.'<sup>230</sup>

---

<sup>229</sup> Lack, *Three decades of Queensland political history, 1929-1960*, p 405.

<sup>230</sup> Ross Fitzgerald, 'Censorship in Queensland, 1954-1983', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol 30 no 1, 1984.

While both of these measures attracted criticism, members of the public never saw either as a cause celebre worthy of widespread attention. No one marched in the streets. There were no spectacular arrests associated with their enactment. Whatever public and political furore there was died quietly. In the case of the Literature Board of Review, it was felt by virtually all authors affected by bans that fighting court cases in protest was not worth the trouble.<sup>231</sup> Over a decade later Tom Truman remarked that the Board had, in its operations, ‘confined itself to the more lascivious of the cheap and nasty productions for the masses and has not prevented anyone reading works of literary merit or educational works.’<sup>232</sup> Still, the two measures illustrate a latent and subtle authoritarianism which no one could regard as being either healthy, or a logical component of a government that was deeply committed to the cause of intellectual freedom.

## 5.10 GAIR AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

The concept that government needed a co-ordinated voice to inform its citizens in the media was novel in the early 1950s despite the existence of the State Public Relations Bureau. Gair believed that the Bureau was needed:

*[T]o keep the people of Queensland informed on the politics of this State, on the activities of the government, and on the legislation and administration of the government, and also to inform people beyond the boundaries of this State, particularly overseas people, of the great potential of Queensland and Australia generally.*<sup>233</sup>

---

<sup>231</sup> Ross Fitzgerald, *From 1915 to the early 1980s: a history of Queensland*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1984, p 591, citing Peter Coleman, *Obscenity, blasphemy and sedition: 100 years of censorship in Australia*, Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1974, p 129.

<sup>232</sup> Tom Truman, ‘Ideological Groups in the Australian Labor Party’, *University of Queensland Papers*. Department of History and Political Science, vol 1 no 2, 1965, p 144.

<sup>233</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 4 November 1952, p 992.

Opposition leader Frank Nicklin was less than convinced, and asserted during the Supply debates that the Bureau engaged 'in a great deal of what might be termed straight-out party-political propaganda.' He also voiced his strong suspicion that the Public Relations Bureau was writing speeches for government members to deliver in the chamber.<sup>234</sup>

Gair always repudiated that criticism, and even years later in the Senate he declared that as the leader of a State government he distributed material 'explaining how legislation had had or was having in the community life of the State. We felt justified in doing that at the expense of the taxpayers.'<sup>235</sup> If the Bureau was doing the Gair government any untoward favours, the government did not show its appreciation by being particularly generous with remuneration. In June 1955 the Public Relations Officer, Clem Lack, memoed the Premier regarding the pay rises recently received by his counterparts in the major daily newspapers. On 29 June Gair forwarded the memo to the Public Service Commissioner for his consideration, noting however that 'Cabinet was of the opinion that regard should be had to the salaries paid to these officers when appointed and there [sic] relation to the journalists award at that time and increases enjoyed by them since then.' It was clear that the premier did not expect the Commissioner to advise that a pay rise was warranted.<sup>236</sup>

---

<sup>234</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 4 November 1952, p 994.

<sup>235</sup> *CPD Senate*, 21 May 1970, pp 1701-1702.

<sup>236</sup> Joanne Scott, Ross Laurie, Bronwyn Stevens and Patrick Weller, *The engine room of government: the Queensland Premier's Department 1859-200*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 2001, p 113.

## 5.11 GAIR AND THE ROYAL VISIT

The Labor party has long been less wont to enthuse over British royalty than their conservative counterparts. Still, there can be no doubt that the Royal Visit of 1954 was a highlight of the early part of Gair's term and the duties attached to it were ones that he fulfilled with a pleasure that was perhaps a little more intense than what might have been expected from one of his political colours.

Gair attended the Coronation of Elizabeth II in London in June, 1953 in his capacity as head of Her Majesty's government. He went to extraordinary trouble to preserve his memories of the occasion, bringing home, covered in plastic, the chairs on which he and his wife had sat during the ceremony. (They were still protected by plastic twenty-six years later.)<sup>237</sup> Seating arrangements seem, for some reason, to have favoured the Gairs. In a letter to a friend, Nell Gair reported that her and her husband had 'a lovely seat on blue velvet chairs, right behind the peeresses. The other premiers and their wives were upstairs on stools!'<sup>238</sup> Immediately after the Coronation Gair spoke warmly of the Queen: 'How magnificently she played her part.'<sup>239</sup>

The 1954 Royal Visit was long awaited. Some time before, a visit from King George VI had been planned: Joh Bjelke-Petersen recalled how he waited for some time outside Gair's office to discuss the monarch's proposed call on Kingaroy with the premier: '[F]inally his door opened a fraction and Gair poked his nose out. He barked

---

<sup>237</sup> Tony Blackie, 'At 78, Vincent Gair Still Has a Lot to Say', *Sun-Herald* 6 May 1979.

<sup>238</sup> *Telegraph* 16 June 1953.

<sup>239</sup> *Courier-Mail* 3 June 1953.

a couple of words at me which I did not even understand and said, ‘That’s your answer.’ And then he slammed the door. My meeting with him was over.’<sup>240</sup>

Despite his lack of interest in discussing Royal Tour details with Bjelke-Petersen on this occasion, Gair took a keen interest in proceedings for the 1954 Royal Visit. (King George VI died on 6 February 1952 and never visited Australia as King.) Some people remarked on the number of appearances that he had scheduled for Royal occasions, suggesting that he would be ‘a phoenix too frequent’ at those occasions, but the criticism was unfair, as his absence would have likely caused indignation.<sup>241</sup> It is more than likely that the occasion offered him some welcome relief from the cares of office.<sup>242</sup> In November 1953 he appropriated £20 000 from the Premier and Chief Secretary's Department for the purposes of the Royal Visit. £20 000 had already been appropriated under the vote for Public Works to cover decorations and other expenses.<sup>243</sup> He even opened up his own home in Annerley, providing seats for 150 children on the lawn so that children from the Dutton Park Opportunity School could see the Queen. The premier also arranged for his home to be decorated with flags, bunting and coloured lights.<sup>244</sup>

Gair appointed himself minister in charge of the visit. Senior staff of the Premier's Department were on all the major tour planning committees. Official correspondence testifies to his close personal involvement and interest in the tour details. The visit was originally scheduled for February 1954. February, of course, is an extremely unpleasant month in Queensland because of high humidity and rainfall and Gair

---

<sup>240</sup> Joh Bjelke-Petersen, *Don't you worry about that!*, p 52.

<sup>241</sup> *Courier-Mail* 10 February 1954.

<sup>242</sup> Joanne Scott, et al, *The engine room of government*, p 113.

<sup>243</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 5 November 1953 p 1065: *Courier-Mail* 25 September 1953.

<sup>244</sup> *Courier-Mail* 6 January 1954.

joined the chorus of protests to Commonwealth authorities over the timing. He issued a critical press statement saying it would be impossible 'to hold such functions such as a State Ball where large numbers of people would be congregated in an enclosed space, or to organise outdoor activities with any degree of certainty that they would be held.' The Commonwealth organisers took the point, and the visit was rescheduled to March, a dubious enough month weather-wise but an improvement on February. Gair's luck, and the weather held.

Gair and his wife had to follow one knotty piece of Royal protocol on the tour. The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh could only be introduced to local dignitaries by someone who had already been presented to the royal couple. However, no plane was allowed to leave before the royal flight, meaning that the Gairs had to leave after their Majesties but arrive before them at all stages of the tour. The problem was solved by having the plane bearing the Gairs follow the Royal plane at a safe distance, and then having the Royal plane circle the airport on arrival to give the Gairs a chance to arrive first.<sup>245</sup>

The sheer novelty of the Royal tour of 1954 and the photogenic qualities of the young Queen made the occasion a memorable one for both organisers and spectators. Overall the tour was a spectacular success. There can be little doubt that the memory of the tour gave Gair a lot more pleasure than some of the other memories of his stewardship. Gair's sons, Paul and Clem, were presented to the Queen. An engaging and stylish photograph of the shy young boys approaching the monarch appeared in the 23 March 1954 edition of the London *Daily Telegraph and morning post*, and

---

<sup>245</sup> Joanne Scott, et al. *The engine room of government*, pp 353-356.

elsewhere. The day after the Queen left Gair waxed emotional in his 'As I See It' column:

*Yesterday we were privileged to share a great and rare moment in our history ...He would be poor indeed in mind and spirit who could remain stolid and unmoved at the sight of her Majesty, happy in the love of her people ...We rejoice not only because we love her Majesty for her innate goodness and beauty, but because she is veritably our own Queen.*<sup>246</sup>

One is left, though, with the impression that the enthusiasm that Gair showed for the visit indicated someone whose sentiments in some things were not totally congruent with that of the mainstream of the Australian Labor Party at the time. But already signs of this, in spheres of activity even more vital than Royal tours were becoming increasingly apparent.

---

<sup>246</sup> *Telegraph* 10 March 1954.



**CHAPTER 6: THE PREMIER AND THE PARTY: GAIR AND THE LABOR  
PARTY SPLIT IN QUEENSLAND**

**PART ONE: TO BUILD A FIRE, 1920-11 NOVEMBER 1955**

## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The three most significant incidents in twentieth century state politics in Queensland all involved the Labor party. The first was Labor's first ever election victory on 1 June 1915. The third was the party's return to power on 2 December 1989, after a generation out of office. The second, and subject of this chapter, was the 1957 Labor party split. With a rapidity and brutal finality that surprised even the most prominent participants, the differences between the organisational, industrial and parliamentary wings of the party detonated and despatched to the opposition benches for 32 years a party that had held together during the conscription crises of World War I, the Depression, and a number of other occasions when the issues in dispute were of far more immensity if of less intensity than the question of whether workers under state awards in Queensland should receive three weeks' leave.

The split was the central event of Vince Gair's political life. Politics is about the exercise of power. Before the split, with a large and largely compliant parliamentary majority, Gair wielded as much as any state premier in comparable circumstances could expect. After it, he never held executive power over the electorate again. Some time later, Gair would come to relish his role as the holder of the balance of power in the Federal parliament, but his ability to directly influence the course of political events was gone forever.

The immediate cause of the split was the refusal of Vincent Clair Gair to accept the direction of the Queensland Central Executive (QCE), the governing body of the Australian Labor Party, to commit his government to a time to introduce three weeks'

leave for all workers under state industrial awards. But the three weeks' leave dispute was the culmination of years of tectonic shifts in alignments within the party.

As is the case with every other historical event, a full account is impossible. When discussing the Labor party split as a whole, Santamaria remarked how historians 'often mistake the motives of those who were there ... Not that the person "who was there" really knows either.'<sup>1</sup> Still, with the advantage of almost half a century's worth of perspective, it is possible to discern trends and indicators associated with the currents and confluences of history which go some way towards explaining the unexpected, unnecessary and futile Labor party schism.

## **6.2 THE COMMUNIST PENETRATION OF THE LABOR PARTY**

The Communist Party of Australia was formed in 1920, although it was of little significance until the Depression gave the party its real momentum. From a very early stage the party attempted, on an organised basis, to infiltrate the established Labor party through the trade union movement. These attempts were manifestations of the 'united front' tactic that Lenin advocated with his enunciation that Communists should attempt to co-operate with other socialist parties in the furthering of common objectives.<sup>2</sup>

From an early date, the Labor party was leery of Communism and the possibility of being identified with it. At the Federal conference of the Labor Party in Brisbane in October 1921, when the Communistic-sounding objective of 'the socialization of

---

<sup>1</sup> B A Santamaria, ' "The Split": Review Article', *Australian Quarterly* vol 43 no 2 June 1971.

<sup>2</sup> Gavan Duffy, *Demons and democrats: 1950s Labor at the crossroads*. North Melbourne, Vic.: Freedom Pub. Co, 2002, p 18.

industry, production, distribution and exchange' was debated, Premier Ted Theodore argued that a qualifying statement needed to be included. At one stage during the debate Theodore was unhappy with matters as they stood, saying: 'That means a complete departure from what the Labor Party stands for. It means disruption and disunity. Why not call it the Communist party?' Theodore had his way, and achieved a compromise. The socialisation objective stayed, but with the qualification that it be achieved by 'the constitutional utilization of industrial and party machinery.'<sup>3</sup>

Despite the Labor Party's wariness of Communism, the Queensland branch of the Communist Party was asking for the support of 'every advanced thinker in the Labour Movement, particularly those in the Trade Union and Australian Labor Party branches' as early as 1924.<sup>4</sup> The Communists were unsubtle about the course which future attempts would take: 'It is inevitable that the Trade Unions, should evolution take a normal course, will pass under the control of the Communists.'<sup>5</sup> The united front tactic was abandoned after Lenin's death in 1924. Stalin reintroduced it in August 1935, but throughout the interim period some sections of the Communist Party in Australia persisted with it in defiance of Comintern policy.<sup>6</sup>

The Communists in Queensland, however, had been repulsed in their efforts with the trade unions at the ALP federal conference in 1924, where it was resolved that the Communist Party could not affiliate with the ALP and that individual Communists were ineligible for membership of the Labor party. This left little scope for

---

<sup>3</sup> *Official report of the ninth Commonwealth conference of the Australian Labor Party*, Melbourne, 1921.

<sup>4</sup> *New Order* (Brisbane) 5 May 1924. This was stated in the first editorial of the shortlived newspaper, copies of which are held in the National Library of Australia.

<sup>5</sup> *New Order* (Brisbane) 27 June 1924.

<sup>6</sup> Gavan Duffy, *Demons and Democrats*, pp 18-19.

Communists to infiltrate the party by conventional means: the subsequent disaffiliation of the militant Australian Railways Union after this conference consolidated right wing control of the ALP in Queensland.<sup>7</sup> Still, throughout the 1920s the Communists in Queensland, where they did not run candidates, gave their support to left wing ALP candidates, or pressed other ALP candidates, on pain of a campaigning against them, to repudiate the past actions of their right wing government and endorse the demands of the working class. By this means, the so-called 'Queensland resolution', the Communists tried to force the ALP to the left as much as to attack its reactionary government as to bridge the gap between Communist and non- Communist workers.<sup>8</sup>

The year after Stalin reversed the policy on the united front, there was a watershed change in attitude from the Communist Party of Australia. Communists were now to work with, to seek affiliation to and, if necessary, to join the Labor Party to secure the united front.<sup>9</sup> Their efforts were now only partly clandestine, but still not always welcomed by some sections of the Labor movement in Queensland.

Two pamphlets from the 1938 state election illustrate the point. In one dated a few days before the election, Alex McDonald, later secretary of the Trades and Labour Council, claimed that the gap between rich and poor was increasing and that 'The real solution lies in the return of the Labor government strengthened with Communist members.' Jim Henry, leader of the Communist Party in Queensland urged the same

---

<sup>7</sup> Kett Kennedy, 'The Anti- Communist Pledge Crisis', in Murphy, D J, R B Joyce and C A Hughes, eds *Labor in power: the Labor party and governments in Queensland 1915-1957* St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980.

<sup>8</sup> Stuart Macintyre, *Reds: the Communist Party of Australia from origins to illegality*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1998, pp 146-147.

<sup>9</sup> McIntyre, *Reds*, p 249-250.

thing, and exhorted electors to ‘Record your vote for the labour movement on April 2 ... Each of you is one unit of the useful people.’<sup>10</sup>

The Communist’s occasional lukewarm support for the Labor party cut no ice with Gair, who as early as 1936 called for ‘the urgent need for organization against this pernicious movement which masquerades as a political party.’<sup>11</sup> But ‘the pernicious movement’ continued to seek unity with the Labor party in Queensland, and met with some success. By 1939 the party claimed to have control over the Trades and Labour Council in Brisbane: a few years before, Communists visiting Trades Hall risked assault.<sup>12</sup> The trend was accelerated when Australia went to war. The need for unity, according to one Communist newspaper, existed at all levels of government. After five Communists were elected to various town or shire councils in 1943, Communists were exhorted to prepare for the Federal elections and to ‘Intensify the struggle for Labor Party – Communist Party unity.’<sup>13</sup>

Communists were also making encouraging progress in other states. In Victoria in February 1933, E J Hogan, lately the state premier, wrote a fateful letter to Daniel Mannix, Archbishop of Melbourne: ‘There is no doubt that the Communists have secretly penetrated the political Labor Party and Labor unions.’ By the end of the 1930s the federal leaders of unions in vital industries related to power, transport and iron and steel were Communists.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Election pamphlets, State Election 1938, John Oxley Library. One is in the form of a letter from Alex McDonald to ‘Dear Elector’, dated 29 March 1938, and from the context it is chiefly aimed at the electors of Kurilpa. The other item, a brochure, is headed ‘To the Electors of Queensland’, and has the photograph of Jim Henry.

<sup>11</sup> *Courier-Mail* 23 June 1936.

<sup>12</sup> MacIntyre, *Reds*, p 353.

<sup>13</sup> *North Queensland Guardian* 14 May 1943.

<sup>14</sup> B A Santamaria, *Against the tide*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press 1981, pp 66–67. The unions cited, and their leaders were Federated Ironworker’s Association (E W Thornton, National Secretary):

At the federal level, Communists tried on several occasions to affiliate with the ALP in the late 1930s, but to no avail. The Federal Executive, when rejecting their overtures in 1937, could not have been more explicit: '[T]he Communist Party is in direct conflict with the policy, platform and constitution of the ALP.'

The Menzies wartime government banned the Communist Party in the early days of the Second World War because of the perception that it was actively hindering the war effort. Officially, it was illegal between 15 June 1940 and 18 December 1942, when the ban was lifted. The interim ban was largely ineffective, with the party maintaining much of its activity from underground, but during this period the nature of the conflict changed, in a way that led to many changes of heart regarding Communism. With Hitler's invasion of Russia in June 1941, the war became a 'people's war against Fascism', as opposed to an 'imperialist war.'<sup>15</sup>

Sympathy for the struggles of Russia against Hitler diluted the indigent fear of Communism, even before the lifting of the ban. In Queensland, George Taylor, backbench member for Enoggera but long a supporter and sometimes a spokesperson for the Russian community in Brisbane (he was imprisoned for six months in the aftermath of the 1919 'Red Flag' riots), spoke in praise of the Russian war effort and said in Parliament that the Tories would have to rely on Communists to win the war. Although Taylor's attitude was challenged in caucus, he was only partially rebuked by Premier Forgan Smith who observed that great latitude was allowed in address-in-

---

Waterside Workers' Federation (Jim Healy, General Secretary): Miners' Federation (W Orr, Federal Secretary): Sheet Metal Workers Union (T Wright, Federal President) and Seamen's Union (Eliot V Elliott, Federal Secretary.)

<sup>15</sup> F G Clarke, 'Labor and the Catholic Social Action Movement', *Labour History* no 20, May 1971.

reply speeches, but also that ‘considerations of mateship and decency’ should apply to them. In September 1941 the QCE noted the developing empathy towards Russia with some concern, and ruled explicitly that ALP members could not be members of the Communist Party or take part in its activities. The resolution complimented the Russian people for the heroism of their struggle, but added:

*We strongly disapprove of the efforts being made by the members of or sympathizers of the former Communist Party of Australia to capitalize [on] the Russian war situation on behalf of a movement which the ALP has stated on many occasions to be opposed to the best interests of the working class.*<sup>16</sup>

Wartime conditions were conducive to the Communist Party reaching the peak of its influence in Australia at this time. Rapid industrialization in response to wartime demands enhanced their influence in the industries in whose union activities they were prominent.<sup>17</sup> The influence of Communism in Australian politics peaked at the July 1945 biennial Congress of the Australian Council of Trade Unions. The Communists had a floor majority at the Congress, where a key amendment to the ACTU constitution providing that the interstate executive should be elected by Congress itself, rather than in part by the state Trades and Labour Councils, was passed. Thus whoever had control on the floor of a Congress would have had total control of the union movement. But the amendment needed to be ratified by the state Councils, most of which were effectively under Communist control at this time.

Had that happened (and it was widely expected that it would) the future course of Australian political history can only be imagined. Miraculously, last minute

---

<sup>16</sup> M G Sullivan, ‘The Expulsion of George Cuthbert Taylor’, in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and CA Hughes, eds. *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland 1915-57*, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980.

<sup>17</sup> B A Santamaria, *Against the tide*, p 67.



organisation unexpectedly produced a veto in Adelaide. C Sharpley, then Communist secretary of the Munition Worker's union wrote a few years later:

*So strong did we become that it was touch-and-go at the 1945 Australian Trade Union Congress whether or not the whole trade union apparatus would fall into our hands.*<sup>18</sup>

Had the key amendment been passed, the subsequent history of the Australian trade union movement and the Australian Labor Party would have been vastly different. 'If the Communists had been able to consolidate their floor majority', mused Santamaria a generation later, 'it is difficult to see what further effective action could have been taken.'<sup>19</sup>

These events set the stage in Queensland, where at war's end, the labour movement in Queensland had three distinct forces competing for influence and support among its members.<sup>20</sup> Easily the largest and indisputably the least cohesive was the obvious one - the Labor party itself. The other two forces, the Communist Party and the Catholic Social Studies Movement (often called, as will be the case here for convenience, 'The Movement') were smaller, more idealistic but far more tightly disciplined, and diametrically opposed. Conflict between the two would, in time, act as the catalyst in the destruction of the Gair government.

---

<sup>18</sup> C Sharpley, *The great delusion*, London: Heinemann, 1952, p 67.

<sup>19</sup> B A Santamaria, *Against the tide*, p 82.

<sup>20</sup> D J Murphy, 'The 1957 Split: "A Drop in the Ocean in Political History"', in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and CA Hughes, eds. *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland 1915-57*, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980, p 481.

### 6.3 THE ORIGINS OF THE MOVEMENT

The Catholic Social Studies Movement, often simply called ‘The Movement’<sup>21</sup> had its genesis at a meeting in 1942 between Catholic lawyer Bartholomew A ‘Bob’ Santamaria, Bert Cremean, later (very briefly) deputy premier of Victoria, and the Archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix. Santamaria was chief among the founders of the *Catholic Worker*, a monthly newspaper that lambasted Communism and, among other things, exhorted workers to reject or eject Communist officials from their positions in the unions. Cremean suggested to Santamaria that he should try to persuade Mannix that there should be a broadly based resistance to the Communist challenges to the Labor party, more broadly based than the ALP’s formal leaders could organise. He, Cremean, believed that professional politicians had no chance against what Santamaria termed ‘the votaries of a pseudo-religion’, but that a Catholic ‘crusade’ based on practical organisation within the trade union movement could rescue and restore the position of the non- Communists in both the party and the unions.

Cremean told Santamaria he believed that as protagonists in a long-term philosophic conflict, the young Catholic lawyer and his allies might have a chance of succeeding where politicians, who saw the struggle in simplified terms, as challenges to their careers and positions, could not. Santamaria later recalled: ‘It was an unusual view for a professional politician. I thought it was a pretty long shot!’ With Mannix’s approval, and financial support of £3 000, the Movement was launched.<sup>22</sup> For many years it

---

<sup>21</sup> ‘The Movement’ was never officially titled such, hence the quotation marks that often appear with the term. However, for the sake of clarity, I have decided to dispense with the quotation marks, but retain the capitalisation.

<sup>22</sup> Santamaria, *Against the tide*, pp 72 –74.

would remain a semi-clandestine association, although its existence, as Santamaria much later remarked, was about 'as secret as the Sydney Harbour Bridge.'<sup>23</sup> 'It is true of course that 'the Movement' deliberately avoided publicity as far as it could', he said in 1960, 'This was solely in order to avoid a sectarian attack by the Communist Party, which would have hampered the work of fighting the Communists.'<sup>24</sup> Secret or not, to this day the precise extent of its influence, while known to be profound, remains a mystery. As Phillip Deery has remarked: 'The secrecy that Cold War exigencies imposed upon Movement operations has endured.'<sup>25</sup>

Then, as now, there could be no doubt as to the seriousness with which the Catholic Church viewed the threat of Communism. In a television interview given when he was almost ninety-eight years old, Mannix described Communism as 'the most serious problem I have had to face in the hundred years of my long life.'<sup>26</sup>

The Catholic Church never supported or approved of Communism, but their anathema to that ideology deepened with the Spanish Civil War. During that conflict, the Spanish Republicans perpetrated a series of atrocities against both priests and lay Catholics. Pope Pius XI's Encyclical Letter *Divini Redemptoris*, was heavily influenced by these events. *Divini Redemptoris*, depicted Communism as wrestling with the forces of Christianity, represented by Franco. The Letter stated:

---

<sup>23</sup> B A Santamaria, *Santamaria: a memoir*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997, p 137. Even so, John Kerr, a lawyer for the industrial groups, and later Chief Justice of New South Wales, and Governor-General, claimed to have not heard the term 'Movement' until about 1954. John Kerr, *Matters for judgment: an autobiography* South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1978, p 144.

<sup>24</sup> 'The Course and Purpose of Mr B A Santamaria', *Australian Financial Review* 21 July 1960.

<sup>25</sup> Phillip Deery, 'Memories of the Movement: John Cotter, Catholic Action and the Early Cold War', *The Hummer*, vol 3 no 3. The Hummer is the publication of the Sydney Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History. It was accessed at <http://www.asslh.org.au/sydney/hummer/vol3no3/cotter.htm> on 18 April 2006.

<sup>26</sup> B A Santamaria, *Daniel Mannix: a biography*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1984, p 199.

‘Communism is intrinsically wrong, and no one who would save Christian civilisation may cooperate with it in any enterprise whatsoever.’<sup>27</sup> In 1949 Catholics were prohibited, under pain of eternal damnation, from joining the Communist Party.<sup>28</sup>

After a few years of operation, Santamaria sought further support from the Australian Catholic hierarchy. At a special conference held in Sydney on 19 September 1945, the Catholic bishops made the fateful decision to support the Movement both morally and financially, conferring on it a church mandate to oppose Communism in Australia. There was unanimous support for the establishment of the Movement nationwide and £10 000 a year was granted for a skeleton staff in each state for its operations, but it was understood that the Movement had to raise any other money itself.<sup>29</sup> For the bishops it was a decisive step, committing them to supporting Santamaria’s organization, but their failure to think through the political implications would in time, as Bruce Duncan has noted, precipitate the split within the ALP.<sup>30</sup>

Members of the Movement were subject to tight discipline, with decisions of the National Executive binding on its members. Santamaria, ‘a very short cherubic faced man’ proved to be a persuasive orator: one observer remembered how:

*He spoke like a machine gun. Arms waving after he warmed up; hands and finger gestures galore. His rhetoric carried me along.*<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> B A Santamaria, *Daniel Mannix: a biography*. Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1984, p 201.

<sup>28</sup> Decree of the Holy Office, 1 July 1949, cited in F G Clarke, ‘Labour and the Catholic Social Studies Movement’, *Labour History* no 20 May 1971.

<sup>29</sup> Douglas Blackmur, ‘The ALP Industrial Groups in Queensland’, *Labour History* no 46, May 1984: Santamaria, *Santamaria: a memoir*, p 97; Duffy, *Demons and democrats* p 38.

<sup>30</sup> Bruce Duncan, *Crusade or conspiracy? Catholics and the anti- Communist struggle in Australia* Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2001 p 82.

<sup>31</sup> Phillip Deery, ‘Memories of the Movement: John Cotter, Catholic Action and the Early Cold War’, *The Hummer*, vol 3 no 3. *The Hummer* is the publication of the Sydney Branch of the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History. It was accessed at <http://www.asslh.org.au/sydney/hummer/vol3no3/cotter.htm> on 18 April 2006.

In the popular consciousness, Santamaria's image would be that of a loner and a religious didact. Late in life, he admitted that he did not 'go to the pub after work with the boys for a beer ... I find it quite difficult to have that sort of relationship with anybody.'<sup>32</sup> Peter Coleman said of him in the *Bulletin* of 15 February 1964 that 'His Catholic faith was of the unquestioning untroubled kind': Santamaria later noted wryly that this was 'the precise opposite to the reality',<sup>33</sup> but the perception would always remain.

Throughout the 1940s, despite its clandestine nature, the Movement made substantial progress. Undoubtedly with a measure of satisfaction, Santamaria noted both the Movement's pervasiveness and its success up to 1949 in a 1957 report to Redmond Prendiville, the Archbishop of Perth:

*The National Executive of this Movement, representing every State and region in Australia, was able to survey the whole of the Communist plan, and to take disciplined and co-ordinated counteraction in every trade union and political labor branch in every part of Australia.*<sup>34</sup>

The Movement cells were the hard core of power in the ALP Industrial Groups (see below for the formation of these in Queensland.) Numerous small groups were set up everywhere and fought Communism locally. Ironically, the structuring of the Movement into cells in scattered locations was partly modelled, by Santamaria's own admission, on the similar setup with the Communist party.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> David Wilson, 'The Man From the Movement', *Weekend Australian Magazine* 16-17 February 1979.

<sup>33</sup> B A Santamaria, '“The Split”: Review Article', *Australian Quarterly* vol 43 no June 1971. In 1997 he admitted ruefully to Robin Hughes 'My life has been singularly bereft of spiritual experiences.' Santamaria, Bartholomew Augustine. [Interview transcript from SBS television program 'Australian Biography.']

<http://www.australianbiography.gov.au/santamaria/interview.html>. Accessed 7 January 2007.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Murphy, 'The Split in Queensland', p 486.

<sup>35</sup> Duffy, *Demons and democrats*, p 39. Santamaria admitted this on the SBS television program, 'Australian Biography.' He was interviewed by Robin Hughes on 23 April 1997, and said 'You had to organise ironworkers to meet the Communist cells in the ironworker unions ... that was the only effective way...If they [the Communists] believed in forming cells, we'd form union cells.' The

In Queensland, the first meeting of the Catholic Social Studies Movement was held in October 1946, after the meat strike. Steps were taken to recruit and train Catholic trade unionists for the task of fighting Communism. Methods seem to have been much the same as in other states. The Movement Chaplain, Father Barney McLaughlin (who in 1980 would officiate at Gair's funeral) would approach parish priests for lists of Catholic unionists and then organise for likely helpers to be approached and asked to assist. Movement cells were established in each parish, and Movement groups were formed in various unions. The Movement initially had its headquarters at the Hibernian Building in Brisbane and, from the early 1950s until the late 1970s, at 79 St Pauls Terrace, Spring Hill. Here an Education Officer briefed Movement members on Catholic social teachings and gave advice on public speaking and organisational skills.<sup>36</sup> This mirrored the efforts of Santamaria, and others, to 'widen the horizons' of some Labor men, including Gair, who in 1953 attended at least two 'seminars' aimed at briefing the attendees on international affairs, economic and financial policy and major policy developments related to trade unions.<sup>37</sup>

How serious was the Movement threat to take over the ALP, and, ultimately, Australia? The conventional wisdom is that the possibility of such a course was slight. The Movement never even controlled the ALP, although they enhanced the power of the Industrial Groups. Robert Murray saw the Movement as an effective pressure

---

interview transcript from this program was accessed on 7 January 2007 at <http://www.australianbiography.gov.au/santamaria/interview.html>. The program was screened some time after his death in 1998.

<sup>36</sup> Duffy, *Demons and democrats*, pp 40-41. The Queensland unions that had Movement groups were the Amalgamated Carpenters and Joiners Society, the Amalgamated Engineering Union, the Tramways and Omnibus Employees' Union, the Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union, the Printing Industry Employees Union, the Federated Ironworkers' Association, the Federated Clerks Union and the Electrical Trades Union.

<sup>37</sup> Santamaria, *Against the tide*, p 129.

group that supported the groups and strengthened them, but concluded that beyond that, its importance was ‘peripheral.’<sup>38</sup>

Others, however, saw the Movement as a threat to the status quo. Former ALP Senator Arthur Gietzelt, a strong supporter of Evatt, maintains that ‘Santamaria was about changing the whole nature of the Labor movement and of Australian society.’<sup>39</sup> In 2002, Phillip Deery produced evidence that Santamaria had bigger plans for the Movement once Communism in the unions had been quashed. Charlie Murphy, who among other things was the manager of Santamaria’s *News Weekly*, a foundation member of the Movement and the foundation secretary of the National Catholic Worker’s Movement revealed in the 1990s that Santamaria had said, at a Movement national executive meeting, that the Movement was going into politics. ‘My heart fell to the floor.’ No other former member of the Movement has ever made such a significant admission. According to Murphy, once the Industrial Groups had virtually won the war in the unions, Santamaria sought to enter the political field, deciding ‘it was his destiny or function to “clean up” the political party, to get rid of “dead wood”... Bob of course deciding who was “dead” and who deserved to survive.’

While Murphy’s claim was interesting, it nevertheless rested on the word and memory of a very old man. Santamaria’s ambitious and expansionist statements were not enunciated publicly at the time. However, they were documented in writing, although not revealed to the public until decades later.

---

<sup>38</sup> Murray, *The split*, pp 54-55.

<sup>39</sup> Paul Ormonde, ‘A Sort of Healing’ [account of a conference at the State Library of New South Wales to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Federal Labor split] *Eureka Street* November 1994.

Santamaria's letter to 'Melbourne No 1' – Mannix – left little room for doubt as to his ultimate intentions. In his letter, dated 11 December 1952, Santamaria boasted of the Movement's potential, which was 'far wider than those of the defensive battle against Communism.' While he might have claimed that his dissembling on the intentions of the Movement was for tactical reasons, the letter shows the pious Santamaria, on this matter, to have been blatantly untruthful. He stated unambiguously:

*The Social Studies Movement should within a period of five to six years be able to completely transform the leadership of the Labor Movement, and to introduce into Federal and State spheres large numbers of members who possess a clear realisation of what Australia demands of them and the will to carry it out. Without going into details, they should be able to implement a Christian social programme in both the Federal and State spheres, and, above all, to achieve co-ordination between the different states in so doing.*<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Phillip Deery, 'Permeation or Paranoia? Dr Evatt's Exposure of 'The Movement', 1954', *Victorian Historical Journal*, vol 73 no 1 April 2002. A lengthy, albeit edited version of this letter was reproduced in the *Weekend Australian* 6-7 January 2007. Robert Murray, in the *Courier-Mail* of 9 January 2007 called this letter 'the frankest statement of any on aspirations for the Catholic Action secretariat, through its industrial offshoot, 'the Movement', to exert major influence, if not control, on the political system.'

The letter was also reproduced in part in Gerard Henderson's *Mr Santamaria and the bishops*, and also, as Deery notes, in Andrew Campbell, 'Politics as a Vocation: A Critical Examination of B A Santamaria and the Politics of Commitment 1936-1957', unpublished Ph D Thesis, Deakin University, 1989, pp 197, 241-242. This thesis, which I have not seen, was the product of over 100 interviews with Santamaria and unique and unfettered access to his correspondence. As Paul Ormonde pointed out in 1994, Santamaria had not challenged the veracity of the document up to that date. ( Paul Ormonde, 'A Sort of Healing' [account of a conference at the State Library of New South Wales to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Federal Labor split] *Eureka Street* November 1994.

Santamaria had written to Mannix along the same lines in 1948, suggesting that Catholic Action should become involved in large-scale action in the social, political, economic and cultural spheres ...'. But Santamaria was reported in the Catholic newspaper the *Advocate* (Melbourne) of 11 August 1955 as saying: 'I repeat what I have already said on two occasions. The statement that I or persons associated with me have been interested in infiltrating the Labor party is totally untrue.' See Robert Corcoran, 'The Labor Split Revisited: Old Memories and New Evidence', in Greg Patmore, John Shields and Nikola Balnave, eds. *The past is before us: the ninth National Labour History Conference, University of Sydney, 30 June – 2 July 2005*. (Accessed early 2006, but link is no longer available.)

A claim similar to Murphy's was made in a letter from John Challis in the *Australian* of 9 January 2007. Challis had 'a clear recollection' of being at a meeting in Perth at which Fr Harold Lalor, the Jesuit national chaplain of the Movement briefed the clergy on the fight against Communism in the industrial and political arenas. Lalor said: 'We now have the numbers to replace Evatt; Stan Keon will be the new leader and the next prime minister of Australia.'

In the *Weekend Australian* of 6-7 January 2007 it was reported that the State Library of Victoria had obtained the 'voluminous' Santamaria papers. A selection of Santamaria's correspondence was collected in *Your most obedient servant: B A Santamaria, selected letters: 1938-1996*. (Melbourne: Meigunyah Press, 2007), edited by Patrick Morgan.



## 6.4 COMMUNISM IN IMMEDIATE POST WAR QUEENSLAND

By 1945 Communists controlled the policies of every major industrial union in Australia, except for those operating in rural sectors. Communist-controlled unions had a combined membership of 275 000, 23 percent of the workforce, and in Queensland ran the state branch of the Australian Council of Trade Unions.<sup>41</sup>

Although the Communists provided what Paul Reynolds called ‘model examples of trade union responsibility’ and were ‘regarded as being moderate union leaders’ during the war,<sup>42</sup> developments after 1945 saw another side to the picture.

Communists were often efficient, focused, and good organisers, leaders by default, who had replaced persons who were weak, inefficient and sometimes corrupt. More sinisterly, like other stakeholders in the union movement, Communists were not above using questionable tactics, including pressure and intimidation, to achieve their ends.<sup>43</sup>

With the war won, and the threat of fascism removed, the picture changed.

Communist militancy in the unions caused genuine concerns in the immediate postwar period. Communists were convinced that the collapse of capitalism was imminent, and that in the volatile social, political and economic milieu of postwar Australia the opportunity was present for it to be toppled forever. They focused on

---

<sup>41</sup> P L Reynolds, *The Democratic Labor Party*, Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1974, p 2, citing H W Weiner, ‘The Reduction of Communist Powers in the Australian Trade Unions’, *Political science quarterly* v 69 no 2 June 1954.

<sup>42</sup> Reynolds, *The Democratic Labor Party*, p 2. According to Reynolds, the Communists in the unions ‘used their position to promote war objectives, resolutely opposing strikes and worker absenteeism, while supporting manpower legislation, wage pegging and the extension of compulsory military service.’

<sup>43</sup> Reynolds, *The Democratic Labor Party*, p 3.

power, transport and heavy industry with their efforts culminating in the bitter New South Wales coal strike of 1949, which led to the Chifley federal Labor government sending in troops to break it, and contributed to Chifley's defeat at that year's federal elections. Statistics both for New South Wales and federally show that the Communist-dominated unions accounted for a disproportionate percentage of days lost.<sup>44</sup>

Clarrie Fallon, Queensland secretary of the AWU and a former federal president of the ALP did not mince words when discussing Communists in the unions at the annual AWU convention in 1945. Fallon said that the AWU owed it to the pioneers of the labour movement to see that no Communist 'heeler' obtained or retained office in any union. 'These heelers must be rooted out, or they will help the Communists and other haters of Australian labour in their deliberate intention to betray the working class movement, render Labor government in Australia impossible, and provide the conditions necessary for a Nazi dictatorship.'<sup>45</sup>

There was little doubt that the Communist Party in Queensland considered Gair, whose rabid anti-Communism had clearly been demonstrated during the meat and rail strikes and on other occasions, as a special adversary. As early as 1945, the state secretary of the Communist party, Jim Henry, said that the party was considering opposing, at the next state election, those it considered 'rightists', including, 'for

---

<sup>44</sup> P L Reynolds, *The Democratic Labor Party* p 6. In New South Wales between 1945 and 1949, Workers in Communist-led unions accounted for approximately one fifth of the workforce, but 77.5 percent of working days lost. Between 1945 and 1948, in all states, Communist-controlled unions accounted for 75 percent of all working days lost. In 1977, Communists admitted that Communist manipulation of the Miners Federation had led to the strike. (B A Santamaria, *Daniel Mannix: a biography*, p 209).

<sup>45</sup> These words were quoted by the then QLP leader, Paul Hilton, in Parliament in 1960. *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 6 September 1960, p 188. I have not sighted the original source.

certain', Gair and Ted Walsh in the seat of Bundaberg. Gair was not greatly concerned, but when quizzed, would not comment further. Walsh, always ebullient in the face of a confrontation, said 'I take it as a compliment to be opposed.'<sup>46</sup> A couple of years later the Building Workers Industrial Union noted in their journal that Gair 'does more than his share of ranting about Reds.'<sup>47</sup> Gair would also do more than his share in opposing them, including poking his nose into internal union affairs. After the end of the 1948 railway strike, he approached Industrial Group officials in Brisbane to see what could be done about the Communist control of the ARU in Queensland.<sup>48</sup>

## 6.5 THE FORMATION OF THE INDUSTRIAL GROUPS

In the earliest days of the Movement in Queensland, it had a couple of strong voices on the Inner Executive of the QCE in the persons of the southern district secretary of the AWU, R J J 'Joe' Bukowski, and Cyril Muhldorff, vice president of the QCE and

---

<sup>46</sup> *Telegraph* 4 April 1945; *Courier-Mail* 5 April 1945.

The Communists endorsed Alec MacDonald for South Brisbane in 1947, not realizing at first that the presence of a Communist candidate would likely give the seat to the Queensland People's Party, the forerunner of the Liberals. (First past the post voting had been reintroduced in 1942: it would be abolished again in 1962.) Gair's local newspaper, the *Southside News* reported on 21 March that the Communists seemed determined to 'seriously affect the Labour Movement by the removal of its most conscientious, efficient and hard-working members.' MacDonald withdrew from the contest, not wanting to help the QPP win the seat. Ten years later, Jack Duggan contended (*Telegraph* 25 July 1957) that if MacDonald had done as well in South Brisbane in 1947 as he had in the seat of Kurilpa in 1938, Gair would have lost. According to the *Courier-Mail* of 1 April 1947, MacDonald said at a meeting at the Albert Hall that 'Communist policy for the state election is to secure the return of the State Labor government.

Walsh's extreme anti-Communism was no secret. On 12 October 1946 the *Courier-Mail* reported his statement that there was no greater threat to the working class of Australia than the Communist Party. As a fighter against Communist influence in the unions, Walsh, according to one journalist, 'loved the job, because he has a candid, overt hate and horror of Communists, and a particular abhorrence of their slinky ways of working – 'like snakes.' *Truth* 17 January 1954.

<sup>47</sup> *Building Workers Journal* 27 May 1947.

<sup>48</sup> Bill Thornton, first full-time industrial officer of the Movement in Queensland and later full-time President of the Central and Southern Queensland Branch of the Federated Clerks Union told Gavan Duffy this in an interview. Duffy, *Demons and democrats*, pp 22, 27.

president of the State Service Union. Even so, the majority of the rest of the Executive preferred to stay with traditional methods of fighting Communism in trade unions rather than creating an official fighting force within. Their attitude changed, however, with the 1946 Queensland meat industry dispute.

During the course of the dispute, several unions rejected the policy of 'industrial peace.' This was a fundamental industrial relations goal of the ALP, rooted in the belief that benefits to unionists could only come from a combination of compulsory arbitration, favourable industrial legislation and sympathetic governments. Direct action and other forms of militancy could threaten Labor's electoral support and discourage capital investment.<sup>49</sup> In mid-1946 the AWU and the Merthyr branch of the ALP urged the creation of an official industrial group structure within the unions to combat the Communist party, which the meat strike had shown to be the principal enemy of industrial peace. The Inner Executive agreed.<sup>50</sup> At the time a wider political role for the industrial groups beyond the eradication of Communism was not envisaged. Nearly ten years later, a grouper member of the Queensland parliament, Mick Brosnan, would claim that the industrial groups were industrial and not political and that under their own constitution they had not been, and would never be associated with any political activities.<sup>51</sup>

Sanctioned by the party executive, and with the 1947 Convention subsequently giving its blessing, groups were first established in the Brisbane branches of the Waterside Workers' Federation and the Australasian Meat Industry Employees' Union.

---

<sup>49</sup> Douglas Blackmur, 'The ALP Industrial Groups in Queensland', *Labour History* no 46 May 1984, p 90.

<sup>50</sup> Executive Committee, QCE, ALP, Minutes, 13 June 1946, 2,3 and 8 July 1946. Cited in Blackmur, 'The ALP Industrial Groups in Queensland', p 91.

<sup>51</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 19 October 1954, p 776.

Traditional ALP unionists such as George Whiteside, of the Federated Engine Drivers and Firemen's Association (FEDFA) organised anti- Communist groups within their unions to retain power.<sup>52</sup> But the 1948 railway strike, which the ALP in Queensland believed, as an article of faith, was orchestrated by the Communist party, showed the ineffectiveness of the earlier incarnations of the groups. Accordingly, in July 1948 responsibility for the creation, maintenance, advancement and control of ALP industrial groups throughout Queensland were placed in the hands of a heavyweight committee, consisting of Joe Bukowski, southern district secretary of the Australian Workers Union, Ted Walsh, the Labor party's state organiser and a former deputy premier<sup>53</sup> and Tom Rasey, a Brisbane City Council alderman and former Queensland president of the Transport Worker's Union. The Industrial Groups Committee was given a blank cheque in determining how the crusade against Communism was to be fought.<sup>54</sup> Bill Thornton, the Movement's Industrial Officer was the go-between between the groups and the Movement. He kept a close association with Bukowski up until Evatt attacked the Movement in October 1954.<sup>55</sup> Although they finished up on opposite sides of the great internecine struggle, and although election rhetoric would see each side accuse the other of fraternising with the Red enemy, the anti-

---

<sup>52</sup> *Official record of the Queensland Labor-in-Politics Convention*, 1953, pp 62-63. Whiteside told the 1953 Convention how the groups within his union had had a unrestricted hand in eliminating Communists from their midst. 'We decided that we should scan the list of nominations for official positions in unions , ascertaining the true Labor men on the list, and support them. That started in 1945 and, from 1945 to 1947, quite a number of Communists were weeded from official positions in industrial unionists... We did this and no one knew anything about it.'

<sup>53</sup> At this time, Walsh was out of Parliament, having suffered a shock defeat in Bundaberg at the state election of 1947. He was subsequently re-elected to Parliament as the member for Mirani in 1950.

<sup>54</sup> Executive Committee, QCE, ALP, Minutes, 8 July 1948. Cited in Blackmur, 'The ALP Industrial Groups in Queensland', p 91.

<sup>55</sup> Duffy, *Demons and democrats*, p 48. Evatt's celebrated attack on the groups and the Movement is covered below.

Communist credentials of the driven Bukowski and the determined Walsh could never seriously be doubted.<sup>56</sup>

## 6.6 THE SUCCESS OF THE INDUSTRIAL GROUPS

It is more than likely that even without the machinations of the industrial groups, Communism in Australia might have lost support very quickly once the war against fascism had been won. From 1946, Moscow dictated that the Communist Party in Australia return to their former policy of opposing traditional unionism and the Labor party. Australian Communists now ridiculed the gradual reformism of the ALP, and believed that the moderate improvements were a hindrance rather than a help to a workers' revolution. As a result, mainstream support for the Communist Party in Queensland declined, and rapidly.<sup>57</sup>

Nowhere was this more apparent than in the voting figures. Voting support for the Communists in Queensland in Federal elections went from 3.53 percent in 1943 (when they contested one seat) to 1.94 percent in 1946 (when they contested two) and to 1.68 percent in 1949 (when they contested eleven.) Voting statistics told a similar sorry tale for the Communists in Queensland state elections. In 1944, they contested five seats for 2.48 percent of the vote, but by 1947 standing in five seats again saw their share of the vote almost halved to 1.26 percent. At the elections of 1950 they contested seven seats for a return of .37 of a percent. Clearly their overall electoral

---

<sup>56</sup> Frank McManus, later a DLP Senator recalled how when, commenting to Bukowski on the severity of his methods against Communists, Bukowski replied: 'Brother, when I go out to fight the nightman I don't put on my dress suit.' Frank McManus, *The tumult and the shouting*. Adelaide: Rigby, 1977, p 101. But also see Chapter 7 for purported archival evidence, raised in the Queensland Parliament on 11 June 1957, that Bukowski had been a member of the Communist party. For Walsh saying that there was no greater menace to the working class than the Communist Party see *Courier-Mail* 12 October 1946.

<sup>57</sup> Barbara Webster, 'Fighting the Grand Cause: a History of the Trade Union Movement in Rockhampton, 1907-1957', Ph D Thesis, Central Queensland University, Rockhampton, 1999, p 200.

threat, despite the election at state level, in 1944 and 1947 of the only Communist to an Australian parliament was minimal.<sup>58</sup>

The impact of grouper activity on electoral behaviour is open to dispute, but industrially, the story was different. Australia wide, the groupers' success was a combination of several things, as John Douglas Pringle noted: the Menzies government's provision for secret ballots in union elections if a sufficient minority demanded one, good advice from industrial lawyers and the mobilisation of the Catholic vote all contributed and, in his words, 'Slowly the tide turned.'<sup>59</sup> Even Opposition Leader Dr H V 'Bert' Evatt attended at least one Interstate Liaison Committee meeting of the Industrial Groups and took the opportunity to express approval for and congratulate them on their activities.<sup>60</sup> By early 1953 even Santamaria was satisfied with the extent to which Communist power had been diminished. He told his wife that he hoped to resign his post and devote himself to his family within two years.<sup>61</sup>

In Queensland, the groupers had some significant successes in the very late 1940s and early 1950s. The branch executive of the AMIEU, whose strike action in 1946 had led to the establishment of the groupers, fell to them in 1949. Other significant successes were within the Federated Clerks' Union, the Federated Ironworkers' Association, the Federated Liquor and Allied Trades Employee's Union and the Queensland Colliery

---

<sup>58</sup> For a biography of Fred Paterson, the only Communist member to be elected to an Australian parliament see Ross Fitzgerald, *The people's champion: Fred Paterson: Australia's only Communist Party member of Parliament*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1997. For voting figures, see Hughes, Colin A. *A handbook of Australian government and politics, 1890-1964*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1968.

<sup>59</sup> John Douglas Pringle, *Australian accent*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1958, pp 78-79.

<sup>60</sup> Duffy, *Demons and democrats*, p 47.

<sup>61</sup> Santamaria, *Against the tide*, p 115.

Employees' Union. Communist influences in the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen and the Transport Workers' Union were routed at union elections, but the groupers were unable to dislodge Communists from the Waterside Workers' Federation, the Building Workers' Industrial Union, the Australian Railways' Union and the Amalgamated Postal Workers' Union.<sup>62</sup> In their own estimation the job had not been completed. In October 1954 Mick Brosnan reported to parliament that the ALP Industrial Groups Interstate Liaison Committee was still concerned at the possibilities of Communist resurgence.<sup>63</sup> Even so, one writer was confident enough to claim that much of the power that the Communists had accumulated in the last twenty years had been wiped out in the last three.<sup>64</sup> As Robert Murray noted, outside the unions and perhaps in the peace movement, Communist Party influence declined throughout the prosperous 1950s, the decline facilitated by the 'persistently unhelpful behaviour in Moscow and Beijing.' While Communist voting strength in the Labor movement fell to approximately 20 percent in the early 1950s it recovered to perhaps one third a few years later: in the 1960s the Communist Party itself would split. In the next decade it would give up, with their mantle being taken up by the Socialist Left of the ALP and minor extreme left parties that would mushroom under various names.<sup>65</sup>

There can be no doubt that the groups were the dominant and divisive issue at the Rockhampton Labor-in-Politics Convention of March 1953, but there can also be no doubt as to which side was dominant. Shortly before the convention Gair had expressed his strong support of the groups: 'Labor has no middle course on this

---

<sup>62</sup> Blackmur, 'The ALP Industrial Groups in Queensland', pp 99-100.

<sup>63</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 19 October 1954 p 775.

<sup>64</sup> H E Weiner, 'The Reduction of Communist Power in the Australian Trade Unions: a Case Study', *Political Science Quarterly* vol 69 no 2 June 1954.

<sup>65</sup> Robert Murray, 'Looking Back on Evatt and The Split', *Quadrant* October 2004.



subject.’<sup>66</sup> At Rockhampton, there were eleven pro-group and three anti-group motions on the agenda, reflecting the ease with which the right was able to control the Convention. The industrial groups received an overwhelming vote of confidence, but there was evidence in the accompanying debates of dismay and doubt in some quarters over the success of the ‘groupers.’ Many anti- Communist union leaders now found themselves under threat from elements outside the union that were drawing up voting tickets based on grouper perceptions of their Communist sympathies. The president of the Electrical Trades Union Industrial group and a member of the Movement based in a northern suburb of Brisbane explained to the 1953 Labor-in-Politics Convention that ‘after Communists and fellow travellers [have been] weeded out [there have been] some complaints that in the process some good Labor supporters have failed to get endorsed.’<sup>67</sup>

One delegate to the 1953 Convention, Jack Devereux of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, a onetime supporter of the groups, now questioned their future role within the unions following the defeat of the Communists. He did not, however, seem at all clear on what direction their future activities might take:

*The question of their future activities arises ... If we are prepared to get down to a stage of giving some consideration to where the Groups might move, having removed the Communists from the organisation, something might be achieved.*<sup>68</sup>

Other speakers at the 1953 Labor-in-Politics Convention at Rockhampton also expressed their concerns at ‘grouper’ activities. P A Davis, representing the Federated Ironworkers Association told the Convention how the groups had ‘robbed’ him of seventy members. Frank Waters, formerly Gair’s colleague in the Parliament but now

---

<sup>66</sup> *Courier-Mail* 28 February 1953.

<sup>67</sup> *Labor-in-Politics convention, 1953*, p 67.

<sup>68</sup> Murphy, ‘The Split in Queensland’, p 489.

delegate for the Amalgamated Postal Worker's Union told the convention how one individual took a line against the Industrial Groups, and:

*[T]he result was that the Industrial Groups ganged up on him as a section within the Labor Party, and that man was plebiscited out of the position he held. He after[wards] turned around and nominated for another position but, by Industrial Group pressure, he was put 20th on the ballot paper for the Senate election.*

Waters continued: 'In unions where no Communists exist but where officials of the union are Labor men, they have still been victimised.' He also noted that the Industrial Groups seemed to have suddenly acquired access to finance:

*I know of ALP branches which did not have a razoo to start off with, but now there is plenty of money. Where does the money come from? The employers give their support.*<sup>69</sup>

An irked Bukowski had the answer to Waters's concerns on grouper finances:

*I will tell you where a lot of it [money] comes from. It comes from around the pub, from running doubles. I have raffled bottles of whisky, bottles of beer and tobacco. Where does the money come from? That is where it comes from. We went out and got the money. We got the money and paid our debts, not like some of the others who use money for political propaganda against this Party.*<sup>70</sup>

Despite these very real concerns, there was a strong vote, 105-7, in favour of the industrial groups continuing their work. Grouper influence increased in October 1953

---

<sup>69</sup> *Labor-in-Politics Convention*, 1953, p 57. Waters and the groupers had clashed as early as 1949, when Bukowski, Walsh and Rasey assisted with the planting of a newspaper story in the *Brisbane Telegraph* on 8 June 1949 that postal workers had been placing Communist propaganda in mail bags. Waters wrote to Bukowski calling the story 'a complete fabrication and a cold-blooded lie', and demanding an apology and retraction. Frank Waters to Joe Bukowski, 10 June 1949, Waters Papers, privately held. Photocopy held by author.

<sup>70</sup> *Labor-in-Politics Convention*, 1953, p 61. Many years later, Joan Riordan, a member of the Federated Clerks Union and of the Movement, and financial administrator in the AWU office under Bukowski's direct supervision testified that his fund raising methods, if not much more sophisticated, were on a much larger scale. Bukowski would canvass business contacts whenever funds were required for a union campaign: all monies raised were kept in a black metal cash box for which only Riordan had a key. See Duffy, *Demons and democrats* p 48.

when the new QCE was elected. Muhldorff were elected unopposed and Gair, Walsh, Artie Cole (of the moderate Railway Maintenance Union), and Mick Brosnan, Gair ally, veteran anti- Communist campaigner, and state organiser of the Electrical Trades Union <sup>71</sup> were also elected to executive positions.

The Movement was always the dominant influence on the Industrial Groups Committee. With the increase of Industrial Group influence, Movement influence, on the QCE increased longitudinally, peaking in the 1953-1954 period. Between 1947 and 1950 a quarter of the QCE belonged to the Movement. This rose to almost a third by the time the delegates to the 1950-1953 incarnation of the QCE had taken their places. Muhldorff (as Vice President), Cole and Brosnan, all of whom belonged to the Movement, were on the Inner Executive, while Vince Gair was closely associated with it by virtue of his private secretary, Brian Mullins, who despite his youth was a senior member of the Movement in Queensland. <sup>72</sup> In connection with this last, however, it is worthy of note, as Brian Costar remarked, that Gair was never one to be influenced by anyone <sup>73</sup>, and there is no evidence, explicit or implicit, that Mullins exerted any particular influence on him.

Was Gair a member of the Movement? While the records of the National Civic Council, the organization which the Movement later became, remain closed to the public, a definitive answer is not possible. In 1977, Anne McMurchy interviewed Gair for her work on the 1956 shearer's strike, but apparently did not ask him about his

---

<sup>71</sup> Brosnan was described in Blackmur, 'The ALP Industrial Groups in Queensland', p 90, as 'a veteran anti- Communist campaigner' even in 1946.

<sup>72</sup> Blackmur, 'The ALP Industrial Groups in Queensland', pp 96-97.

<sup>73</sup> Brian Costar, ' "For the Love of Christ, Mick, Don't Hit Him": The Split in Queensland', p 65, in Brian Costar, Peter Love and Paul Strangio, eds. *The great Labor schism: a retrospective* Melbourne: Scribe, 2005. In this chapter, however, Costar misidentifies Mullins as Paul Hilton, Gair's works minister and later QLP leader.

Movement involvement, stating instead that: ‘Gair’s connection with the somewhat sinister Catholic Social Studies Movement, an organisation that had much wider goals than the industrial groups, was a matter for speculation.’<sup>74</sup>

Few could doubt that he heard a great deal about what they were up to, both from Mullins and from other sources, and approved of it. But when Joe Bukowski accused him of being a member of the Catholic Social Studies Movement, Gair denied the ‘despicable, malicious and mischievous untruth’ and asserted:

*As a practicing Catholic distinct from a nominal Catholic, I am not a member of any Catholic organization or society affiliated with the Catholic Church. Mr Bukowski and others who know me, I am sure, will concede that if I were I would not lack the courage to admit it.*

Gair then turned the attack back on Bukowski, noting that that he had been ‘the foremost figure’ within the Industrial Groups, but that he, Gair, had merely supported them in a few ballots from time to time, mindful of the fact that their activities had been endorsed by Labor conventions in 1947, 1950 and 1953.<sup>75</sup> Gair’s logic was irrefutable.

## **6.7 THE DECLINE AND OUTLAWING OF THE GROUPS**

The power of the groups peaked at the 1953 convention, but as the discussions there showed, there had long been concerns among union leaders in Queensland and

---

<sup>74</sup> Anne McMurchy, ‘The Pastoral Strike, 1956’, in D J Murphy, ed. *The big strikes: Queensland 1889-1965* St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1983, p 256.

<sup>75</sup> Undated typescript, Gair papers. Series 5, Speeches, Articles, Broadcasts Box 6, Folder 46. At his death, Gair was a member of the Redemptorist Oblate, a Catholic order devoted to charitable works. (*Catholic leader* 23 November 1980.) Of course, this does not mean that he was a member of the Oblate in the early 1950s.

elsewhere that the groups were more than just organisations of anti- Communist trade unionists, and that they were straying from their intended purpose. As early as 1948 the annual conference of the Amalgamated Postal Workers Union passed a resolution that no support be given to them. A union pamphlet disavowing the groups suggested that the Labor party members on the Industrial Groups Committee use other methods of improving conditions rather than grouper activity to root out Communists. The author, more than likely Frank Waters, boasted of the superior conditions under which the APWU members operated, and accused the members of the ALP Industrial Groups Committee of neglecting their more important concerns in favour of group activity:

*In Camping Parties our members have a refrigerator supplied to each party which is out for three months or more, and wireless sets are in the process of being supplied to all parties.*

*Can the AWU claim the same conditions for shearers and Main Roads employees? Perhaps Mr Bukowski could give this matter attention when he stops poking his nose into other Union's affairs.*

*Alderman Rasey might also try to have shift penalty and week-end penalty rates applied to members of his Union [the Transport Workers Union] and bring their wage rates up to the APWU level.*

*The other member of the ill-fated trio, Mr E J Walsh, had innumerable opportunities when he was Minister for Transport in the Queensland government to improve the amenities for Railway employees, particularly railway fettleers.*

*Ask the average railway employee how he succeeded.*<sup>76</sup>

At the landmark 1949 Federal elections, at which the Liberal-Country coalition wrested power from the Labor party after eight years in Opposition, Queensland Labor found that the Liberal and Country parties were receiving assistance from people associated with the groups. One pamphlet bearing the endorsement of both

---

<sup>76</sup> Amalgamated Postal Workers' Union, *The attitude of the APWU to ALP Industrial Groups*. Brisbane: APWU, 1950 (?). Waters Papers, privately held. Photocopy held by author.

Frank Waters and Jack Egerton, secretary of the Boilermaker's Society, claimed that the Menzies government was 'not disinterested financially in the activities of the ALP Industrial Groups', and that there were 'strong grounds' for suspecting that money from secret funds was finding its way to some Industrial Group members so that the work of Menzies could be carried out within the unions.<sup>77</sup> Concern about the groups and their activities was causing reached to the highest levels of the Labor Party: on 1 June 1951, Prime Minister Ben Chifley told a young Jim Cairns that 'we would run into a lot of trouble' because of them.<sup>78</sup>

It was also observed, and with more suspicion than would accompany a perceived coincidence, that the groups always seemed flush with funds although the traditional wings of the party, the branches and the unions, were often broke. Even so, the work of the groups was commended at the 1950 Queensland Labour-in-Politics convention, and, as previously noted, they received a resounding vote of confidence (105-7) from delegates at the 1953 convention. Federal Opposition leader Evatt has pleased with the efforts of the groups, telling an Industrial Groups rally in Sydney in March 1952:

*A vindication of what has been done by the Labor Movement in the industrial field is now apparent to all ...The efforts of the ALP Groups to combat Communism and its extremists who have attempted to dominate the trade unions have been completely justified by events.*<sup>79</sup>

But in Queensland, others were not so satisfied. In February 1952 The secretary of the Ipswich branch of the Federated Engine Driver's and Fireman's Association of Australia, K Merrell, wrote to the ALP secretary, Syd Bryan, stating that the branch

---

<sup>77</sup> *ALP Industrial Groups menace the Labor movement* no publisher, no date, but probably 1951. In Australian Labor Party. Queensland. Records. Industrial Groups File. OM.CM/1/33. John Oxley Library.

<sup>78</sup> Irene Dowsing, *Curtin of Australia*, p vi. Melbourne: Acacia Press, 1969.

<sup>79</sup> Quoted in B A Santamaria, "*The Movement*" 1941-60: *an outline*. Melbourne: Hawthorn Press, [1961?],p 22-23.

‘look[ed] upon this body as sinister to the Australian workers ...[and] wish[ed] it to be known that we resent their interference.’ Jack Schmella, Bryan’s successor, tried to mollify Merrell, replying that ‘the activities of the Industrial Groups are only directed towards trade unions who are Communist-controlled or against persons who are Communists and aspire to official positions.’<sup>80</sup> Jack Egerton wrote to Schmella, in September 1952 protesting at the unwarranted interference by the groups in the affairs of the Society, and appealing to the QCE ‘to halt this indiscriminate interference with trade unions.’<sup>81</sup> Schmella took no action, and continued to bolster the cause of the groups, writing to one party branch shortly after the 1953 Convention that for a unionist to be on an ALP ticket ‘he must be selected as the most suitable candidate by the Industrial Groups Committee. In other words, that he will be the most effective in carrying out the principles of the Party.’<sup>82</sup>

Twenty years later Gair asserted that he was not directly associated with the groups although he ‘knew what they were doing and supported their work.’

*We felt that the ALP was not being white-anted but red-anted at the base and very little was being done about it. We were conscious of the fact that Doctor Evatt could be depended upon to have around him people of extreme leftist views who appeared capable of creating a liaison between the Labor movement and the Communists.*<sup>83</sup>

By this time, the composition of the QCE's inner executive had changed to reflect the power of the groups, much in the same way as it had to reflect the power of the Movement, and often involving the same individuals. Gair, extremely supportive and

---

<sup>80</sup> K Merrell to Syd Bryan, 15 February 1952; Schmella to Merrell, 18 March 1952. Australian Labor Party. Queensland Branch. Records. Industrial Groups File. OM.CM/1/33. John Oxley Library.

<sup>81</sup> Egerton to Schmella, 8 September 1952. Australian Labor Party. Queensland. Records. Industrial Groups File. OM.CM/1/33. John Oxley Library.

<sup>82</sup> Schmella to Geebung Branch, ALP, 22 June 1953. Australian Labor Party. Queensland. Records. Industrial Groups File. OM.CM/1/33. John Oxley Library.

<sup>83</sup> Peter Blazey and Andrew Campbell, *The political dice men* Canberra: Outback Press, 1974, p 61.

approving of the groups was on the inner executive by virtue of his position as parliamentary leader. AWU state secretary Harry Boland became QCE president after the death of Clarrie Fallon in 1950, and does not seem to have ever been closely associated with or a member of the groups, but Cyril Muhldorff of the State Service Union, a Movement member and a grouper was vice-president. Other prominent QCE members had, for the moment at least, impeccable grouper credentials. Ted Walsh, Tom Rasey and Joe Bukowski, 1948 appointees to the ALP Industrial Group Committee were all QCE members. For the moment, grouper influence at the highest echelons of power in the ALP looked set to continue indefinitely – but such would not be the case.

In July 1954 the secretary of the Wandal ALP branch wrote to Schmella asking that the QCE disband the Groups. The sentiments were crudely expressed, and the language was florid, even for the turbulent times, but the depth of the sincere concern could hardly be doubted:

*The Labor support of the groups has cut the stomach of Labor policy so wide open [that there is] [in]sufficient material to stitch it together again ... we expect action not words before it is too late of [sic] operate on this decease [sic] that will spell fatal to the Australian Labor Party.*<sup>84</sup>

It is not known if Schmella replied. Two and a half months later, there was no need to.

---

<sup>84</sup> Secretary Wandal Branch, ALP to Schmella, 29 July 1954. Australian Labor Party. Queensland. Records. Industrial Groups File. OM.CM/1/33. John Oxley Library.



## 6.8 THE AWU AND BUKOWSKI AGAINST THE GAIR GOVERNMENT

Federal Labor Party leader Evatt's turning on the groups and the Movement in a speech at Morgan's Bookshop in Sydney on the afternoon of 5 October 1954 was one of the few unambiguous turning points in Australian political history.

It would often be claimed afterwards that Evatt was looking for someone to blame for Labor's narrow loss in the Federal election of 29 May. Actually, Evatt had been alerted to the dangers of the Movement well before the election loss. In January 1954 he had got word that Santamaria had met with the Sydney branch of the Movement and discussed his, Evatt's, removal as party leader. Jim Ormonde, vice president of the New South Wales branch of the ALP, wrote to Federal President Joe Chamberlain on 23 February 'Frankly, Joe, I am shocked that the Federal Executive needs any proof about the activities of this 'Movement' or its power for destruction.'<sup>85</sup>

A victory had seemed assured until Menzies revealed the defection of Soviet third secretary and consul Vladimir Petrov on 13 April. Labor gained five seats more than at the elections of 1951, but lost by a narrow spread of a few hundred votes over four key seats. There was an unsuccessful challenge to Evatt's leadership from Perth backbencher Tom Burke: overoptimistic as it was, it showed Evatt the level of opposition against him from the right wing of the party in Victoria, who made up most of Burke's 20 votes against Evatt's 64. Evatt counterattacked, blaming the electoral defeat on disloyal Victorians, accusing them of being 'largely directed from outside the Labor Movement. The Melbourne *News Weekly* appears to act as its

---

<sup>85</sup> Duncan, *Crusade or conspiracy?*, p 207.

organ.’ No one doubted that he was referring to the Movement, and while he cited the state of Victoria, his claims would, in time, reverberate in Queensland.

Evatt’s 5 October 1954 statement meant that other influential players had to take a stand as well. Among these were Tom Dougherty, Federal Secretary of the AWU and his Queensland acolyte and long-term Gair enemy, Joe Bukowski. For a time, in the second half of 1954, there had been talk that the Groupers would back Bukowski against the Federal Secretaryship of the AWU, but Bukowski fell into line behind Dougherty, possibly because of the vulnerability of his own position that his feuds with the North Queensland section of the AWU had engendered. Once he was ‘on side’, there was no doubt where he stood. At the AWU conventions held in January and February 1955, Bukowski was violently and melodramatically attacking his former allies in the Groups and the Movement.<sup>86</sup> In a speech to the annual delegate meeting of the Queensland branch of the AWU on 17 January 1955, Bukowski repudiated the groups, and pledged the AWU and himself to support Schmella, Evatt and the anti-group forces in the southern states. It was a pledge that would have disastrous consequences for anyone in the ALP in Queensland with any grouper or Movement sympathies. Unfortunately for Gair, he demonstrably had an abundance of both.

Many years later, Fred Whitby, later president of the Trades and Labour Council, would say of the man who would prove to be Gair’s archenemy: ‘If Bukowski hated

---

<sup>86</sup> Murray, *The Split*, p 310. Bukowski’s almost instantaneous about face on the groups was the most outstanding manifestation of his volatile and disturbed personality in this period – and this is saying something. According to the recollections of B A Santamaria, ‘His switch from outright support for the Groups to outright opposition in January 1955 ... took exactly twenty-four hours.’ B A Santamaria, *Against the tide*, p 100.

someone there was nothing he wouldn't do to undermine and destroy them.' <sup>87</sup>

Rochus Joseph John Bukowski, 'big, bulky and ruthless ... an ex-cane-cutter with hands like hams and eyes as expressionlessly bleak as a crocodile's' <sup>88</sup> - played a larger part in the Queensland Labor split than any other individual except for Gair himself. When it came to Bukowski, Gair was unfortunate on three counts. Firstly, for a brief and crucial time, Bukowski wielded almost unlimited power in Labor circles when he served concurrently as AWU and QCE president. Secondly, Bukowski's behaviour in the crucial period between 1956 and 1958 showed strong signs of a psychological illness, manifested in paranoia and extremely irrational and inconsistent actions. <sup>89</sup> Thirdly - and this went back to their boyhood - for some reason Bukowski hated Vince Gair with a passion.

The cause could have been as simple as the vast difference in their personalities. Tom Hiley, who knew both men, and well, believed that the pair fell out 'on a purely

---

<sup>87</sup> Wayne Swan, 'Factionalism in the Case of Queensland Labor, 1959-1966', Bachelor of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1975, p 25. Swan interviewed Fred Whitby on 11 July 1975.

<sup>88</sup> *Sunday Telegraph*, 5 May 1957. The journalist was Alan Reid.

<sup>89</sup> Murphy, 'The Labor Split' p 507. The brittle state of Bukowski's mental health clearly played a significant role in the Queensland split. Brian Costar ('Vincent Clair Gair: Labor's Loser' in D J Murphy, Roger Joyce, Margaret Cribb and Rae Wear, eds. *The premiers of Queensland*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 2003, p 283) claimed that Murphy's description of Bukowski's mental health problems 'err [ed] on the side of charity.' Bukowski was unwell during the 1957 campaign, and late in July he had to rest under the orders of his doctor. Frank Nicklin claimed that Bukowski 'has been so distressed that he has become physically ill.' (*Courier-Mail* 29 and 30 July 1957) As early as January 1955, Bukowski himself revealed that he 'went berserk' at a meeting of the inner QCE executive. (*Courier-Mail* 29 January 1955.) Jack Egerton, Secretary of the Boilermaker's Society, writing to Joe Schmella as early as 1952 complained about Bukowski's unwarranted and unwanted interference in the domestic affairs of the Society and said of Bukowski and his then associates in the Groups, '...a reminder that 'those who the Gods destroy they first make mad' might not go amiss.' (Egerton to Schmella, 20 October 1952, Australian Labor Party. Queensland. Papers. Industrial Groups File OM.CM/1/33, John Oxley Library.)

After Bukowski's death, a poignant and revealing article (albeit without a byline) appeared in the *Sunday Truth* of 24 January 1960 on the sudden deterioration of his health which, according to the journalist, was accompanied by 'a clearly apparent deterioration, too, in his normal lifelong attitude of friendliness and goodwill towards people generally.' The article said that 'he became a man with whom it was easy, far too easy, to pick a quarrel' and claimed that when he died there were more writs for defamation and the like bearing his name than anyone else's. 'Their existence could well be a reflection of the dreadful toll that ill health took of once-easygoing, tolerant, genial Joe Bukowski.'

personal basis.’ Gair, a pompous speaker and one to very much stand on his dignity could not have failed to be affronted by the persona of the bullying, crude and blustering Bukowski. According to Hiley, Gair’s:

*pomposity made it physically impossible for him to take Joe Bukowski’s rude and insulting approach without feeling mightily offended... I know positively that Joe Bukowski would have been very very difficult to Vince. Joe was a respecter of nobody. Vince, on the other hand, would have been quite unforgiving of anything that affronted his dignity as premier. And the two were just oil and vinegar.*<sup>90</sup>

Gair later strongly implied to Anne McMurchy that Bukowski had bullied him at school,<sup>91</sup> but records of St Joseph’s College at Rockhampton show that while both attended the school, they were not there at the same time.<sup>92</sup> There is, however, no doubt that they knew each other as boys. On the day before Ned Hanlon died, 14 January 1952, Gair addressed the AWU Annual Delegate Meeting in Brisbane at Bukowski’s invitation. In welcoming the acting premier, Bukowski recalled how he and Gair had known each other as lads, significantly, ‘as members of opposing groups in Rockhampton.’ Even if it was delivered through clenched teeth, Gair’s reply was adequate as a social pleasantry but filled with irony, given the experiences that the two had shared in the past and would share in the future:

---

<sup>90</sup> Thomas Hiley Interview 1:2/17. Suzanne Walker, National Library of Australia, 1974. Gair had previously shown extreme sensitivity when he stated that he took ‘serious issue to such headlines in the news columns such as ‘Menzies says’ or ‘Gair says.’ The offending newspaper, the *Telegraph* announced in its next edition: ‘It is surprising to find such a sensitive spot in the armour of a parliamentary veteran but the Premier is entitled to defend his dignity. ... To the accusation that they use the unadorned surnames of public men in headlines, sub-editors must plead guilty, believing that men who are big enough to rate such treatment are big enough also to take it as the compliment it implies.’ *Telegraph* 18 and 19 November 1953.

<sup>91</sup> McMurchy, Anne, ‘The Pastoral Strike, 1956’, in D J Murphy, ed. *The big strikes: Queensland 1889-1965*, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1983, p 257. McMurchy’s exact words were: ‘Their animosity dated back to their schooldays in Rockhampton, where Bukowski’s bullying had made life a misery for those boys, such as Gair, who were smaller and physically weaker than himself.’ Gair may have been mistaken, or have wanted to leave the impression that he had been bullied by Bukowski at school. Neither possibility precludes the scenario that Bukowski bullied Gair during their schooldays, but while the boys were attending different schools in the same district.

<sup>92</sup> Michael Talty to author, 12 May 1984.

*It is nice to look back on those boyhood days to which Mr Bukowski referred. They were days, probably, when we believed that we had a lot of worries, but they were really days of freedom from troubles and tribulations or any full appreciation of just what worries and troubles mean.*<sup>93</sup>

The next day Hanlon was dead, and there was a corresponding acceleration of ‘worries and troubles’ for Gair and for the AWU. A few weeks after the accession, George Devries, former member of the AWU and minister for education said:

*‘Mr Gair will not be as generous and considerate to this union as the previous premiers have been ... I know some of Vince Gair’s qualities and I know his little shortcomings but I feel that the important responsibilities that have been placed upon him will be heavy and he will look to this union for guidance.’*<sup>94</sup>

Almost all of Devries’s prophecy came true, except that with his old enemy Bukowski in charge, there was little chance of Gair looking for guidance from Queensland’s most important union.

After the shared boyhood with Gair, Bukowski, after an unsuccessful attempt at enlisting in World War I (he was sent home when it was discovered he was underage) worked at innumerable physical jobs in the outback, Far North Queensland and Papua New Guinea before finding his true forte, that of AWU organiser, with a particular flair for negating the Communist influence in areas where the AWU was being white-anted. ‘I’ve slapped Communists down wherever I’ve been - in Mt Coolon, Ayr, Home Hill, Mackay, Bundaberg and Brisbane’, he recalled. He was indisputably a bully, bragging to Frank McManus on one occasion that he signed up reluctant workers for his union in northern New South Wales (part of the AWU’s Southern Queensland District, but in a state where unionism was not compulsory) ‘because they

---

<sup>93</sup> *Worker* 4 February 1952.

<sup>94</sup> *Worker* 10 March 1952.

know that if they don't, we will throw them in the river.' <sup>95</sup> Bukowski became Southern District secretary in 1941, looking after the needs of over 25 000 members, and, in 1950 he was elected president of the Queensland branch of the AWU. At the time of the split, Bukowski was looking after the interests of 84 000 union members working under 300 different awards and industrial agreements. <sup>96</sup>

Anecdotal evidence from some quarters does not indicate a high regard for his intellectual capacity. A young Don Dunstan, later premier of South Australia for most of the 1970s, worked with Bukowski on party committees and described him as 'displaying intellectual prowess which would have made Li'l Abner look like a genius.' <sup>97</sup> On the other hand, a contemporary portrait of Bukowski in a Sunday newspaper profile painted a different picture – a studious man who would not waste his spare time in the reading of fiction. <sup>98</sup> But it was not Bukowski's 'intellectual prowess', or lack of it, that would impact most on the life of Vincent Gair in the critical years of 1956 and 1957. Rather, it was Bukowski's emotional response to, it seemed sometimes, Gair's very existence that helped to set the course of Queensland political history, even after both men were dead. It was not for nothing that Gair would later suggest facetiously of Bukowski that 'The [Country-Liberal] government should build a monument to him as the founder of the only Tory government since 1929.' <sup>99</sup>

---

<sup>95</sup> Frank McManus, *The tumult and the shouting*. Adelaide: Rigby, 1977, p 100.

<sup>96</sup> *Who is this Bukowski?*, ALP election pamphlet, Brisbane: ALP, 1957. Fryer Library Collection.

<sup>97</sup> Donald Allen Dunstan, *Felicia: the political memoirs of Don Dunstan*. South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1986, p 64. Cited in Brian Costar, 'Vincent Clair Gair: Labor's Loser.'

<sup>98</sup> Hardy, Ken. 'The Strong Man of the Anti-Red Camp' [Joe Bukowski profile], *Sunday Truth* undated clipping, but 1951 from context: cuttings file on Bukowski, John Oxley Library.

<sup>99</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates*, 21 November 1957, p 1250.

Gair's actions at the Federal Conference in Hobart of March 1955, where the Labor party split, did nothing to enhance his relationship with Bukowski. In the wake of the party split in Victoria, two conference delegations flew to Hobart from that state, a new executive that was predictably strong anti-Grouper, and the 'old' executive led by Senator Frank McManus. Gair was one of seventeen of the thirty-six accredited delegates who decided to defy the federal executive and boycott the conference unless the thirty non-Victorian delegates were permitted to decide which Victorian delegation was eligible to attend it. University of Queensland political scientist Tom Truman would later claim that Gair was 'in fact, the acknowledged leader of the Groupers in Hobart': certainly he was prominent in the happenings there.<sup>100</sup>

Before the conference started, the Federal executive ruled that the anti-Groupers were Victorian Labor's legitimate representatives, but McManus and his delegates turned up at the conference venue and demanded admission. Gair and most of the Queensland delegation were there in support of them. They found their way blocked by a large size in AWU stalwarts, carefully chosen for the occasion, who insisted that only credentialed delegates were allowed in. Gair and McManus and their supporters huffed off to convene a pow-wow of their own, but not before the utterance of angry and bitter words. Gil Duthie, MHR wrote years later: 'Only cool heads averted an ugly outbreak of violence that morning.'<sup>101</sup>

Gair was under no illusions as to what he had done or the enemies he had made by aligning himself with the Groupers. At Hobart another renegade Labor delegate, Jack

---

<sup>100</sup> Tom Truman, 'Ideological Groups in the Australian Labor Party and Their Attitudes', *University of Queensland Papers. Department of History and Political Science*, volume 1 number 2, 1965, p 139.

<sup>101</sup> Gil Duthie, *I had 50 000 bosses: memoirs of a Labor backbencher 1946-1975*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1984, p 158.

Kane of New South Wales, who later served alongside Gair as a DLP Senator, said to Gair: ‘Vince, what are the chances of winning out when you go home?’ Gair said: ‘Cut it out, none.’ Kane said: ‘I don’t mean your government, you’ll certainly lose that. But, er, what about your seat?’ Gair said: ‘Billie the pig couldn’t lose my seat so long as he had a Labor endorsement.’<sup>102</sup>

Bukowski was furious at Gair’s actions in Hobart, saying menacingly: ‘the matter will return to the local ALP branches and affiliated unions, when those who have abused their charter will be measured according to their worth.’ Gair, however, said that he expected QCE support because the decision of the Federal executive to admit the ‘new’ Victorian delegation to conference would have given the latter the opportunity to sit in judgment on an appeal by the ‘old’ Victorian executive, ‘in direct conflict with all tenets of justice and fair play.’ All that the boycotters had done was contend that no delegates from Victoria could be admitted until such time as the issue had been decided by the delegates of the other states. ‘I think nothing could be fairer than this, the only issue that caused the majority from the five states to absent themselves from the conference.’<sup>103</sup> Gair said in the *Courier-Mail* of 18 March 1955: ‘I am confident that after hearing our report and the reason for our actions, that the QCE will endorse them.’

Bukowski was less than satisfied and said that the boycotters should return their expenses.<sup>104</sup> He denounced Gair and Walsh in the *Worker* of 21 March 1955:

*They were not sent to Tasmania to admire the scenic beauties of Hobart, but to get down to hard earth in the conference room and to stand loyally by decisions made therein, whether on the winning or losing side.*

---

<sup>102</sup> Peter Manning, ‘The Long Haul for the Senate’ [profile of Jack Kane], *Bulletin* 19 February 1970.

<sup>103</sup> *Telegraph* 17 March 1955.

<sup>104</sup> *Telegraph* 21 March 1955.



*Seemingly, they were not prepared to do that, and because they were not I have no doubt that the last of this unsavoury matter in which the State premier (Mr Gair) and the Treasurer (Mr Walsh) appear to have played important but in my view unedifying roles has yet to come.*

The QCE Inner Executive meeting of 22 March was ugly. Walsh claimed that he had not claimed expenses for Hobart, and that Bukowski should withdraw a statement that he had. It was claimed that Walsh threatened to punch Bukowski, who replied that Walsh would not have made such a threat six months before. 'I was physically fit then. You now know of my illness and you want to fight a man who has a foot in the grave.'<sup>105</sup> Presumably, a punch from Walsh, who reportedly had 'arms like gumtrees [and] legs like church pillars' by the time he was twenty would have been no joke to an unwell man.<sup>106</sup>

A few days later, the QCE rejected a vote of no-confidence in the premier 31-23, a majority but not a decisive one.<sup>107</sup> In a bizarre but clever compromise that kept everyone happy for the time being, the state Parliamentary Labor Party subsequently supported the decisions of the Hobart conference as well as endorsing Gair's leadership. The *Courier-Mail* was not fooled, seeing the decision as 'one of self-preservation for state Labor politicians.'<sup>108</sup> Ominously, a later meeting of 19 unions

---

<sup>105</sup> *Courier-Mail* 23 March 1955.

<sup>106</sup> *Truth* 17 January 1954. When it came to relying on physical violence to make a political point, Walsh had form. He had a celebrated brawl with the independent member for Townsville, Tom Aikens, in the Speaker's lobby on 31 October 1944. Both were burly men, but Walsh, who had provoked the fight, and delivered the first blow was getting the worst of it when the protagonists were parted. Ian Moles, *A majority of one: Tom Aikens and independent politics in Townsville*, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1979, p 138.

<sup>107</sup> *Courier-Mail* 26 March 1955.

<sup>108</sup> *Courier-Mail* 31 March 1955.

affiliated to the ALP, including the AWU voted to censure Gair and the other boycotters by 31-23.<sup>109</sup>

In the branches, the reaction to Gair and his fellow boycotters was mixed. Jim Keefe, party organiser and later a Senator, but writing in his capacity as secretary of the Geebung branch in Brisbane, called their action ‘tantamount to disenfranchisement of thousands of affiliated unions and branch members and a useless wastage of party funds.’<sup>110</sup> The secretary of the Bowen branch wrote: ‘their action savours of dictatorship and the sooner people within the ALP with those tendencies are relieved of their membership, the better it will be for the party.’<sup>111</sup> But other branches were supportive. The acting secretary of the Roma branch asked Schmella to convey the branch’s congratulations to the boycotters. Diplomatically perhaps, Schmella simply acknowledged receipt of the letter.<sup>112</sup>

After Hobart, there was no going back for the relationship between Gair and Bukowski. But it may have been a trifling incident around this time that pushed things over the edge. Late in March 1955 Bukowski revealed that he and Gair had agreed to discuss sectarianism but because of a ‘remark’ by Gair he had never been near him since.<sup>113</sup> Few would doubt that Gair was capable of a snide remark. Similarly, there was never any indication that Bukowski was ever willing to quickly forgive a slight, even a momentary verbal one, even to avoid a serious conflict.

---

<sup>109</sup> Murray, *The split*, p 310.

<sup>110</sup> Jim Keefe to Joe Schmella, 27 March 1955, Australian Labor Party. Queensland. Records. OM.CM/2/1, John Oxley Library.

<sup>111</sup> Bowen Branch to Joe Schmella, 21 March 1955. Australian Labor Party. Queensland. Records. OM.CM/2/1, John Oxley Library.

<sup>112</sup> Ian Hindmarsh to Joe Schmella, 27 March 1955; Schmella to Hindmarsh, 31 March 1955. Australian Labor Party. Queensland. Records. OM.CM/2/1, John Oxley Library.

<sup>113</sup> *Telegraph* 28 March 1955.

## **6.9 THE TRADES AND LABOUR COUNCIL AGAINST THE GAIR GOVERNMENT**

In Queensland, divisions within the Labor party and movement were not solely attributable to the presence of the Movement and the groups. Unions felt that Gair was not as sympathetic towards them or as responsive to their needs as befitted the leader of a Labor government.

In some ways, this was demonstrably unfair. A case could be put forward that the Gair government had a good record in worker welfare. In Gair's time as premier, long service leave was introduced for all wage and salary earners in Queensland. All workers after twenty years with the one employer, including seasonal workers in the sugar, meat and other industries who returned to the same employer each year received thirteen weeks leave. Coal and shale mine workers pensions were increased. Easter Saturday became a statutory holiday. Workers compensation payments were expanded, the amount of accumulated sick leave that could be used in one year was increased from five weeks to seven weeks, government subsidies were increased for worker's superannuation schemes, and introduced on incapacity benefits, and employment was expanded with the extension of electrical supplies into rural areas. It became compulsory for employers to pay holiday pay at the commencement of holidays, and the unfair but common practice of standing down employers at Christmas and re-engaging them in January was stopped when it became mandatory to pay workers for Christmas-New Year holidays. Most of these improvements came at the expense of the employer rather than the worker, and it is worthy of note that the government was the biggest employer of all.<sup>114</sup> Even Labor historian Denis Murphy,

---

<sup>114</sup> *Courier-Mail* 3 November 1955; *Sunday Truth* 20 November 1955.

never a defender of Gair, noted the Gair government's 'significant industrial reforms'. His research confirmed that working conditions in Queensland were accompanied by the highest real wages, adjusted for prices, in Australia.<sup>115</sup>

Despite all this, the period was a time of increased alienation between the Trades and Labour Council and the government, and of missed opportunities on the government's part to at least act as one sympathetic to the Council. Despite obvious ideological differences, previous Labor governments and QCEs had tried to at least listen to TLC concerns, but under Gair the treatment became off-handed. As early as April 1955 the TLC was wearying of the refusal of government ministers to meet with their deputations on various issues. The TLC accused the government of treating them with contempt and recorded in their minutes 'that the refusal of those Ministers to meet deputations to enable proper discussion to take place on matters that affected the Trade Unions was in fact alienating much support of Trade Unionists from the Minister concerned.'<sup>116</sup>

Declaring publicly that no Cabinet minister had set foot in Trades Hall for eight or nine years, Gair's old adversary from the Postal Workers' Union Frank Waters added: 'They are quick, however, to attend functions organised by employer organizations, or where employers are present.' Gair retorted that Labor premiers had visited Trades Hall in the days when it was controlled by genuine Labor men, and 'Cabinet ministers could go to the Trades Hall without being insulted.'<sup>117</sup>

---

<sup>115</sup> Murphy, 'The 1957 Split', p 491.

<sup>116</sup> Queensland Trades and Labour Council, Minutes, 20 April 1955. Cited in Joy Guyatt, 'The Labor Government and the Queensland Shearer's Strike of 1956', *Labor History* no 33, November 1977.

<sup>117</sup> *Courier-Mail* 6 May 1955.

The TLC reaction was predictable in October 1955 when the parliamentarians voted themselves an increase in salaries. A twenty minute meeting of the TLC executive resolved to protest, and call on the parliamentarians not to accept the increases until there was an adjustment in the basic wage and margins for lower paid workers. The TLC also requested a meeting with Gair and as many Cabinet members as possible 'to see what can be done to overcome the glaring anomalies between the salaries of politicians and the wages of tradesmen and lower paid workers.'<sup>118</sup> No meeting ever eventuated.

Late in 1955 minister for labour and industry, Arthur Jones and the TLC clashed when Jones declined their request that police be withdrawn from the Industrial Court during the hearing of proceedings. The TLC saw it as 'a complete denial of the fundamental principles of the Labour Movement, and Council is of the opinion that Unions should be completely unfeathered [sic] when making applications or conducting other business in the Arbitration Court.'<sup>119</sup> Jones replied - after some months - that the President of the Court, Mr Justice Brown, was of the opinion that proceedings were public and that every person had the right to attend.<sup>120</sup> Early in 1956, during an electricity dispute, Gair floated the possibility of penal provisions for offenders and additional restrictions. The TLC informed him that 'penal provisions of any character against the unions or their members involved in this dispute [would] be resisted with the full strength of the trade union movement.'<sup>121</sup>

---

<sup>118</sup> Trades and Labour Council, Executive Meeting, *Minutes*, 10 October 1955. Fryer Library, University of Queensland.

<sup>119</sup> Trades and Labour Council, *Minutes*, 13 December 1955.

<sup>120</sup> Trades and Labour Council, *Minutes*, 22 February 1956.

<sup>121</sup> Trades and Labour Council, *Minutes*, 8 February 1956.

Other ministers besides Jones and Gair showed their reluctance to negotiate, or even meet with the TLC. Tired of the persistent refusal of treasurer Ted Walsh to meet with their deputations, the Council resolved to take the matter up with Gair <sup>122</sup>: over a year later, the difficulties that they had experienced in arranging a meeting with Walsh led them to ask Premier Gair for a meeting on worker's compensation, rather than the treasurer. <sup>123</sup> Public Works and Housing Minister Paul Hilton pleaded 'no time' when asked to meet with them on the Commonwealth and States Housing Agreement, so they asked him again. <sup>124</sup> Such episodes would provide fertile ground for discontent and discord, and would render the Trades and Labour Council willing to listen to those – even old adversaries - who urged retaliation against an indifferent and uncaring government.

## **6.10 THE CASE OF THE INDUSTRIAL COURT**

Unions from all sides of the spectrum expressed concerns over the Industrial Court, which made them wait for lengthy periods for decisions. As early as 1948, the petitioners to the Court were encountering delays that were noted in the press. <sup>125</sup> Trades and Labor Council secretary Mick Healy wrote to Gair that year expressing disappointment that the government had allowed the President of the Arbitration Court, Matthews, to go to Tasmania to hear a claim for Tasmanian parliamentary salaries when there were was a large court backlog in Queensland. <sup>126</sup>

---

<sup>122</sup> Trades and Labour Council, *Minutes*, 31 October 1955, 25 July 1956.

<sup>123</sup> Trades and Labour Council, Executive Meeting, *Minutes*, 5 March 1957.

<sup>124</sup> Trades and Labour Council, *Minutes*, 3 March 1956.

<sup>125</sup> *Courier-Mail* 4 April 1948.

<sup>126</sup> QSA A 9893 Labour and Industry General Correspondence 1946-1954. Healy to Gair, 30 September 1948. Queensland State Archives.

For reasons that were never made clear, Gair neglected for years to appoint anyone to replace W J Riordan when he retired from the Court in 1952. The unions hoped that someone sympathetic to the labour movement would be appointed to the vacancy.

Eventually, in February 1956 Gair appointed John McCracken, former Public Service Commissioner, to the Court in an effort to ease the backlog. McCracken, whose time as Public Service Commissioner had not endeared him to the unions, and who was in poor health, was not a popular appointment. The Trades and Labour Council protested:

*We believe such an appointment to a person of Mr McCracken's age is merely the granting of an excessive pension ...as Mr McCracken has been in the main an employer's advocate during his many years as Public Service Commissioner, he should not have been appointed to the Court, but, on the contrary, someone with more leanings towards the labour movement should have received such an appointment.*<sup>127</sup>

It was widely believed at the time that Bukowski believed he should have been appointed to the Industrial Court instead of the conservative and unwell McCracken. But Gair, for good reason, believed that the bullying and blustering Bukowski was totally unsuited for the subtleties required for overseeing negotiations with employers in the restrained and notionally impartial atmosphere of the court. For example, throughout the 1956 shearers' strike (which will be discussed in full below) Bukowski demonstrated many instances of an 'irrational and illogical approach to court behaviour and case presentation.'<sup>128</sup>

---

<sup>127</sup> Trades and Labour Council, Executive Meeting, *Minutes*, 21 February 1956. Fryer Library, University of Queensland. McCracken died in September 1956.

<sup>128</sup> Anne McMurchy, 'The Queensland Shearers' Strike of 1956', Bachelor of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1977, pp 123-124.

Bukowski, seeing that there was ‘nothing doing’ with regard to a spot on the Industrial Court bench declared his disinterest:

*Personally, I'm not interested in any Court appointment. But if I were, and if, as has been suggested to me, that Mr Gair would never consent to me being appointed on personal lines, then something is wrong. Very.*<sup>129</sup>

The disinterest was, more than likely, feigned. But the menace of the warning to his enemy in the premier’s chair, however measured, could not be mistaken.

## **6.11 GAIR’S ENEMIES MARSHALL THEIR FORCES**

Unlike the AWU officials, Gair declined to change sides in the matter of the Industrial Groups. After he boycotted the Hobart Conference he was on a course of inevitable collision with what was easily Queensland’s largest union, as well as other sections of the labour movement. Gair had managed to upset influential people from all sides. It was inevitable that his enemies would come together, in a new coalition in opposition to the premier.

Jack Schmella, QCE organiser (who had clashed with Gair at the 1954 federal executive meeting over intervention in Victoria to break the power of the Movement in that state), AWU officials Bukowski and Boland, state parliamentarians such as Speaker J H ‘Johnno’ Mann and Felix Dittmer who had clashed with Gair and Walsh in the caucus, and an assortment of left-leaning Trades Hall affiliated unions all

---

<sup>129</sup> *Worker* 31 December 1956.



formed part of the opposition to Gair. Among the last group was the Boilermakers Society, whose secretary, Jack Egerton, would play a crucial role in Queensland political history over the next few years.

By his own account, the Hanlon government's handling of the railway strike had left him with a dislike of politicians,<sup>130</sup> something that would hardly have fostered a close or trusting relationship between Gair and himself. Egerton, although politically inexperienced and at times unsubtle, would prove a thorough organiser, with an eye for detail. He would later recall: 'I suppose as I was just about the youngest of the union officials, I became an energetic leader.'<sup>131</sup> In the twelve months before the election of the 1956 Convention delegates, he worked with those on the right wing of the labour movement enumerated above: the result was that when the convention delegates were elected, Egerton's bridge-building skills had fashioned an unstable coalition that nevertheless constituted a comfortable anti-grouper majority for the 1956 Convention compared to the overwhelming grouper majority that had sat at the Convention of 1953.<sup>132</sup> The unholy alliance of the left and right would spell nothing but trouble for an unreflecting Labor premier who either did not have the perceptiveness to realise that a parliamentary leader who simultaneously alienated all sides of the Queensland industrial labour movement did so at his peril, or else knew and did not care about the consequences.

---

<sup>130</sup> *National Times* 31 March 1979.

<sup>131</sup> Egerton to Don Whittington, 17 September 1973. In Egerton Cuttings File, National Library of Australia.

<sup>132</sup> Murphy, 'The Split in Queensland', p 496.

## 6.12 THE PROBLEMATIC ISSUE OF THREE WEEKS LEAVE

The issue that would eventually put the Labor party in Queensland out of office for a generation had an unremarkable genesis at the 1953 Labor-in-Politics convention when Dr Felix Dittmer, MLA for Mount Gravatt, moved ‘that it be the aim of the Labour Movement to obtain for the workers three week’s annual holidays in southern areas and four weeks in the northern and western areas.’<sup>133</sup> Passed without opposition or debate, the motion remained in abeyance, coiled and serpentine under the table, until January 1955.

A group of unions sent a delegation led by moderates George Whiteside (Federated Engine Drivers and Firemen’s Association) and Jack Devereux (Amalgamated Engineering Union) to meet with Gair, Walsh and Arthur Jones, minister for labour and industry to seek an amendment to the act to provide for three weeks’ leave instead of two, for employees working under state awards. The intention was for the moderate unionists to outflank the Communist influences in the unions, who were thought to be planning to embarrass the ALP by seeking the extra week’s leave through industrial action. Gair and his ministers left Whiteside and Devereux with the impression that they would legislate for the change. ‘We were assured that we could leave the matter with them and that the government would not be unwise in the matter.’<sup>134</sup> But nothing was done. Gair’s perceived unequivocation on the matter would later cost him dearly: many union officials were led to believe that three weeks’ leave was inevitable for all workers and had informed their members accordingly. It would leave many

---

<sup>133</sup> Murphy, ‘The Split in Queensland’, p 494.

<sup>134</sup> *Official record of the twenty second Queensland Labor-in-politics convention*, Brisbane: The Worker, 1956, p 75.

otherwise union leaders in no mood to give Gair latitude when he procrastinated on the issue later on.<sup>135</sup>

Around the same time, the QCE appointed a subcommittee consisting of Bukowski, Devereux and others to meet the premier on long service, sick and annual leave. Gair indicated to this committee that Arthur Jones was working on amendments of the act that would cover long service and sick leave and that 'it was not a bad idea to have something in their policy speech about three weeks' leave.' The impression formed was that the improved leave allocations would not be introduced during the 1953-1956 Parliament, but that it would be introduced after the 1956 election.<sup>136</sup> Gair procrastinated for a time and finally indicated, late in 1955, that his government was prepared to legislate for the change 'as soon as possible.'<sup>137</sup> There was nothing novel about the notion of three weeks' leave. Gair had granted three weeks' leave to public servants in 1952, thus benefiting the Grouper-controlled Queensland State Services Union (QSSU) and Federated Clerks Union, but ignoring AWU members and the craft unions represented by the Trades and Labour Council.

Throughout 1955 and 1956 various interest groups wrote to Gair both in support of and against the implementation of three weeks' leave. One branch of the Building Worker's Industrial Union suggested that there would be political gain in introducing the measure even earlier than what was rumoured: 'The workers in this state would show their confidence in the Labor party by returning it with an overwhelming

---

<sup>135</sup> *Official record of the twenty second Queensland Labor-in-politics convention*, Brisbane: The Worker, 1956, p 55.

<sup>136</sup> Murphy, 'The Split in Queensland', p 498.

<sup>137</sup> *Worker* 19 March 1956.

majority.’<sup>138</sup> There were dark hints of the confrontation to come if the unions were disappointed. The TLC sent a letter to all Labor parliamentarians reminding them that ‘it is the express wish of all unions and their members that the policy of three weeks’ annual leave, retrospective to 1 January 1955, should be granted in the present session of parliament.’<sup>139</sup> One private citizen sent Gair a cheerful reminder that the leave could be introduced without any deleterious effect as any industrialised state, Queensland included, ‘can today produce goods and services at a far greater rate than the population can consume them.’<sup>140</sup>

The correspondence of others took on darker tones. The Secretary of the Cairns District of the Trades and Labour Council called the government’s reversal ‘a distinct blow to the whole Labour movement.’<sup>141</sup> Another correspondent expressed his ‘disgust’ and said, on behalf of his shop floor, ‘we feel that the workers of Queensland have been given a raw deal.’<sup>142</sup> Gerry Dawson, state secretary of the Building Workers Industrial Union said workers on his site would request the QCE to ensure that its members adhere to policy on pain of suspension from the party.<sup>143</sup> Joe Harris, later an enthusiastic historian of the early days of the party, took a more conciliatory line when he wrote to Gair pointing out that the change was viable because of the tremendous increase in industrial productivity and the introduction of new methods in the building trade, including prefabrication, precutting and power

---

<sup>138</sup> A Stevens, Secretary Wynnum Sub Branch Building Workers Industrial Union to Gair, 28 October 1955. Queensland State Archives. Chief Secretary’s Batch no 468C Part 1, ‘Three Weeks Annual Leave.’

<sup>139</sup> Forde to Gair, 7 November 1955. Copy of [Trades and Labour Council out-letter ?] no 8453, dated 26 October 1955. QSA Chief Secretary’s Batch no 468C Part 1.

<sup>140</sup> E W Parkes to Gair, 8 November 1955, QSA Chief Secretary’s Batch no 468C Part 1..

<sup>141</sup> J H Grebert to Gair, 22 November 1955. QSA Chief Secretary’s Batch no 468C Part 1.

<sup>142</sup> J D Burns, Hon Sec of shop, Evans Deakin Kangaroo Point to Gair, 10 November 1955. QSA Chief Secretary’s Batch no 468C Part 1.

<sup>143</sup> Gerry Dawson to Gair, 21 November 1955. QSA Chief Secretary’s Batch no 468C Part 1.

hand tools.<sup>144</sup> But producers' associations provided the other side of the argument. The Australian Sugar Producer's Association<sup>145</sup> and the Cane Growers Council<sup>146</sup> both argued that bringing an extra weeks leave would unreasonably increase the burden on their industry.

On 23 September 1955, the QCE recommended to the Cabinet that three weeks' leave be introduced. There was no response. The QCE had to wait until the Brisbane *Telegraph* of 25 October reported that the legislation would not be introduced and that the PLP had endorsed Gair and Walsh's view that the economic situation would not allow for the additional cost that an extra weeks' leave would incur.

Bert Turner, backbench member for Ashgrove raised the matter in Caucus on 2 November, and Gair fobbed him off by telling Caucus that the QCE did not intend to have the three week's leave introduced in the current session of Parliament. Turner seemed satisfied, but Les Wood, backbench member for Toowoomba was not as easily mollified. Wood asked Gair directly if Cabinet had come to a decision on the matter. Gair then said that Cabinet had discussed it, and that it would not be introduced in the current Parliamentary session. He added that the unions were able to apply to the Court for an increase in leave, but none had done so, apparently preferring to rely on legislation for the extra leave. Some members of Caucus were prepared to argue the case for the extra leave, but Gair, minister for labour and industry Arthur Jones, and backbenchers Mick Brosnan and Alfred Smith reminded them that Devereaux's motion for three week's leave at the 1953 convention had not

---

<sup>144</sup> Joe Harris to Gair, 6 August 1956. QSA Chief Secretary's Batch no 468C Part 1.

<sup>145</sup> Australian Sugar Producers Association Secretary [name not legible] to Gair 15 April 1957. QSA Chief Secretary's Batch no 468C Part 1.

<sup>146</sup> Queensland Cane Growers Council to Gair, 12 June 1957, QSA Chief Secretary's Batch no 468C Part 1.

mentioned a specific time for adoption. Caucus was satisfied – or said that it was satisfied – that Cabinet would do something about the matter in the near future.<sup>147</sup>

Gair told the QCE he considered their recommendation as a recommendation only, and not an instruction, and that the government was thus not bound to any timetable. He tried to soften the blow by announcing that long service leave entitlements would be extended in part compensation.<sup>148</sup> But the QCE was not mollified. In response, the QCE on 11 November 1955 voted 38-10 to instruct the PLP to introduce the three weeks' leave. The QCE sent out letters to that effect to all PLP members the next day. For the first time, a direct order was given.<sup>149</sup>

---

<sup>147</sup> J H Mann to J A R Egerton, Boilermaker's Society of Australia, 3 November 1955. Egerton had this letter retyped and sent to the Amalgamated Postal Worker's Union. The letter was in the collection of Frank Waters, privately held. Photocopy held by author.

<sup>148</sup> *Courier-Mail* 3 November 1955.

<sup>149</sup> The exact wording of the resolution was: 'that this meeting of the QCE expresses its dissatisfaction with the interpretation placed by the Parliamentary Labor Party on the decision of this body in relation to leave entitlements and we hereby direct and instruct the Parliamentary Labor Party to provide for four weeks annual leave for shift workers and three weeks for others, and further direct and instruct all members of the Parliamentary Labor Party to support such legislation.' Jack Schmella to members of the Parliamentary Labor Party, 12 November 1955. Australian Labor Party, Queensland. Records. Three Weeks Leave File. OM.CM/1/39. John Oxley Library.

**CHAPTER SEVEN: THE PREMIER AND THE PARTY: GAIR AND THE  
LABOR PARTY SPLIT IN QUEENSLAND**

**PART TWO: CONFLAGRATION: FROM 11 NOVEMBER 1955 TO 3  
AUGUST 1957**

## 7.1 THE ISSUE OF OUTSIDE DICTATION

It had long been a truism within the Labor party that there was a necessity for its parliamentary representatives to be subject to influences and recommendations from outside the parliament. Robin Gollan argued in 1960 that from the earliest times: 'The socialist concept of the Labor Party as the party of the working class justified the demand that the party should accept direction from extra-parliamentary organizations of the working class'.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, all political parties are subject to some influences from their respective organisations, a point that the conservative parties were not at all anxious to stress during the turbulent times of 1956-57. Few politicians, however, would have gone as far as George Pollock, when he remarked in the House in 1915:

*What is the use of an organisation of working men if ... they cannot ... dictate to the powers that be in the legislature? ... I look forward to the time when a big industrial organisation will be able to dictate to every Parliament in the world.*<sup>2</sup>

The issue of outside dictation to the parliamentary wing of the Labor party by the administrative one had been raised by Labor's opponents, and by the conservative press. For example, in the 1930s, the *Telegraph* declared righteously that 'Nothing could be more subversive of political liberty, more detrimental to good government,

---

<sup>1</sup> Robin Gollan, *Radical and working class politics: a study of Eastern Australia, 1850-1910*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1960, p 171.

<sup>2</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 21 September 1915, p 824, cited in A A Morrison, 'Militant Labour in Queensland, 1912-1927', *Royal Australian Historical Society Journal* vol 38 no 3, 1952, p 211. Morrison noted dryly in his footnote: 'In later years Pollock apparently changed his views.' Pollock rose to be Speaker of the Parliament, but took his own life in his Parliament House office in 1939.



than the extraction of pledges from candidates and members that they shall be subject to the final arbitrament of the QCE.’<sup>3</sup>

In 1953 one journalist noted that the QCE could give parliamentarians ‘their orders on issues which the executive thinks profound enough, but it does not ordinarily intervene on proposed legislation.’ The journalist rationalised this ordering of parliamentarians by an unelected body ‘because that is the Labor system, which the people accepted when they voted the party to power.’<sup>4</sup> But Forgan Smith made it clear that the parliamentary Labor party was under no obligation to accept QCE direction, and reportedly said that if this happened, Cabinet would have to sit in the *Worker* building, and the people of Queensland would have ‘a Cabinet composed of marionettes pulled by people who were not responsible to the whole of the people of the state.’<sup>5</sup> On a wider scale, respected British Labor Prime Minister Clem Attlee said a few years later that the party executive was ‘a guidance to the Parliamentary party, not an absolute mandate ... there can never be any question of orders being issued by the National Executive to a Labour government.’<sup>6</sup>

Both Walsh and Gair had gone on the public record in defending the QCE and its role. Replying to the allegation by Labor’s opponents that the QCE was ‘a sinister secret junta of dictatorial tendencies’, Walsh defended the executive in a radio broadcast late in 1953. Walsh told his listeners that the power of the QCE had never been abused:

*On the contrary, despite repeated attempts over many years to get a decision which could be interpreted as seeking to direct public administration, it has*

---

<sup>3</sup> *Telegraph* 2 August 1934. ‘Arbitrament’ means the judgment of an arbitrator.

<sup>4</sup> H J Summers, ‘It’s the QCE Who Gives The Orders: Labor Members Must Obey’, *Courier-Mail* 17 July 1953.

<sup>5</sup> This quote is from the *Truth*, 30 September 1956. I have not been able to find the original source of the quote. In the Queensland Labor Party newspaper, the *Standard* of 22 June 1960, the quote was rendered as ‘If Cabinet accepted direction from the Queensland Central Executive they would be reduced to a set of marionettes.’

<sup>6</sup> Attlee, Clement. *A prime minister remembers: the war and post-war memoirs of the Rt Hon Earl Attlee*. London: Heinemann, 1961, p 91.

*been consistently laid down that it is not within the functions of the QCE to in any way interfere with matters of administration.’ He also noted that if the QCE was **to protect or guard the interests of the party generally** [bold in original] there had ‘to be some control over members or branches who seek to, or do make decisions which are likely to bring the party into disrepute.’<sup>7</sup>*

The next year, Gair also defended the QCE, referring to the ‘superb effrontery and complete disdain for the evidence’ shown by the party’s critics in ‘their attempt to convince electors that we are an undemocratic organisation, subject to the dictation of some sinister secret junta.’<sup>8</sup>

But in August 1955, by which time the storm clouds had gathered over the three weeks leave issue, J J Ryan, secretary of the Vehicle Builder’s Union, referring to dissatisfaction within the Labor party, made no bones about the primacy of the outside body in terms of the implementation of policies made at Convention:

*[T]here is a tendency, particularly among Parliamentary representatives of the party, to endeavour in every way possible to sidetrack many of the decisions with the excuse that their implementation would be impracticable. No Labor member of Parliament, whether he be an ordinary backbencher, a Cabinet minister, or even premier, has the right to make excuses to avoid implementing decisions of convention.’<sup>9</sup>*

There could be no doubt as to which situation Ryan was referring.

Cabinet met and rejected the QCE directive on 14 November 1955. Caucus debated the issue for six hours two days later. Gair told the caucus meeting: “Never in the history of the Labour movement in Queensland has the QCE directed the Parliamentary Labor Party as to the time legislation should be introduced.’ Gair threatened that the Cabinet would have to consider resigning if caucus accepted the

---

<sup>7</sup> E J Walsh, ‘QCE is Labor’s Guardian: “Power Never Been Abused”’, *Labor News* November 1953.

<sup>8</sup> Vince Gair, ‘Australia is indebted to Labor Movement’, *Labor News* January 1954.

<sup>9</sup> *Labor News* August 1955. Despite the unambiguity of Ryan’s thoughts on the matter, he later voted against the expulsion of Gair.

directive. There was a long meeting in which rebellious backbenchers put forward the idea of a new Cabinet headed by Frank Forde, a former Prime Minister who was now, however, serving as a humble backbencher for the northwestern seat of Flinders. It was not Forde's idea: indeed, his biographer David Gibson remarked how he 'watched with bewilderment the fragmentation of the ALP both at the State and federal levels.'<sup>10</sup> Prominent anti-Gair backbencher Felix Dittmer moved a compromise motion for a conference with the QCE to resolve the dispute, but his motion was overshadowed by that of another backbencher, Tom Rasey, who moved that Cabinet reject the QCE directive. Rasey's amendment was carried 28-20, an indication of the roughly equal apportionment of those in caucus who supported and opposed Gair. Many of those in the minority were AWU members. When he heard of the Caucus decision, Jack Egerton demanded that Gair resign, as Labor could not win with him as leader.<sup>11</sup>

At this juncture, a long overlooked, touching and curious incident tintured the unsentimental drama. Duggan presented Gair, on behalf of the party, with the gift of a china vase. While the article was likely more in line with Nell Gair's interests than her husband's, the gesture was an ironic one, given the course of later events. Duggan said that the vase would remind Gair that the party had a very genuine appreciation of him and his personal qualities. Gair's response was typical and homiletic. He reminded the gathering that once a matter was debated by Cabinet and a decision taken, all had to take responsibility for it. To do otherwise 'would be a cowardly exit

---

<sup>10</sup> David Andrew Gibson. 'The Right Hon. Francis M Forde P C: His Life and Times', Bachelor of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1973, p 169.

<sup>11</sup> Brian Costar, Costar, Brian. 'Vincent Clair Gair: Labor's Loser' in D J Murphy, Roger Joyce, Margaret Cribb and Rae Wear, eds. *The premiers of Queensland*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 2003, pp 278-279. See the *Courier-Mail* 12 November 1955, and 17 November 1955 for Egerton's demand that Gair resign.

from the responsibility which each and every one of you is required to share.’ Gair told his colleagues that if they were true to themselves, played the game, recognised their responsibilities and the principles that were involved in the issues that came before them, there would be no defeat for the Labor party.<sup>12</sup>

In late 1955, at a very late stage in the electoral cycle, it well behoved the party to maintain some semblance of unity. Elections were due between March and June 1956. Labor had lost office in Victoria in June 1955, and there was no desire anywhere in the Queensland labour movement to follow suit. After Gair had threatened to resign and the majority of the PLP showed its hand by deciding to stand with him, the QCE asked the PLP to reconsider its decision. The PLP, fearful of negative commentary from the conservative press during the election campaign if it accepted a direction on the leave issue, reaffirmed its decision, this time by 30-19. The QCE then decided, without any opposition from within its ranks, to refer the question to the Labor-in-Politics Convention, due to meet in Mackay in February and March, 1956.<sup>13</sup> On 13 February, at the general meeting of the QCE, Devereux moved:

*that this meeting of delegates expresses disappointment with the State Parliamentary Labor Party in refusing the wishes of this body to legislate for three weeks annual leave, particularly when it is considered that the wish of the QCE was made known to the Parliamentary Labor Party by – (1) request (2) instructions according to the Rules (3) further request. We again re-affirm our decision that the workers are justly entitled to three weeks annual leave and that same should be introduced without delay.*<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> *Telegraph* 18 November 1955.

<sup>13</sup> D J Murphy, ‘The 1957 Split: ‘A Drop in the Ocean in Political History’ in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and C A Hughes, eds., *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland, 1915-57*, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980, p 499.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Joy Guyatt, ‘Trade Unions and the Australian Labor Party in Queensland, 1947-1957’, Master of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1971, p 249.

## 7.2 THE CONVENTION OF 1956

When writing of the political generation that came after Gair, Graham Richardson claims that more media attention is paid to the Labor Party, whether in government or opposition, than the conservatives and highlights the contrast between party conferences in terms of media interest:

*Only the laziest of journalists could fail to get a good yarn out of any of our conferences, whether state or federal. Contrast this with the Liberal Party conferences, whose purpose is solely to guide the parliamentary party and whose decisions bind no one.*<sup>15</sup>

It is certain that the 1956 Convention provided a source of what Richardson called ‘a good yarn.’

In what must have seemed to him another lifetime, Gair had in 1953 spoken glowingly of the Labor in Politics Convention:

*The convention is, in effect, a worker’s parliament where the political and industrial representatives of Labor can speak freely in open forum bound only by the rules of debate.*

*Here the shearer, the miner and the artisan meet on the common ground of Labour’s ideals with the factory worker and the clerk.*

*Every L I P Convention has produced results of lasting benefit to the people. Decisions of Convention are reflected in the progressive legislation that Labour governments have made statute law over the years.*<sup>16</sup>

By 1956, however, for Gair, the Convention had metamorphosed from the benevolent agency for change that he had praised in 1953. From the onset of the Convention, it was clear that he and his supporters were not going to fare well. The opening address

---

<sup>15</sup> Graham Richardson, *Whatever it takes*, Sydney: Bantam, 1994, p ix.

<sup>16</sup> *Telegraph* 25 March 1953.

by the QCE president and AWU representative Harry Boland was a less-than-subtle dig at Gair:

*Let us forge unity in the Labor government. We cannot have that unity at the expense of the destruction of throwing overboard of some principle associated with the [labour] Movement which many of these people would have us do. The majority decisions have always been obeyed by the minority and that is how it will continue, and I suggest that that is how it should be.*<sup>17</sup>

Things got no better for Gair after the opening address. Ballot after ballot for positions and committees showed the anti-Gair forces outnumbering the pro-Gair forces in proportions of approximately 8:5. The AWU-Trades Hall coalition rapidly established its supremacy. Duggan and Dittmer were elected to the QCE, as was Gair himself, but influential Gair supporters, most notably Walsh and Attorney-General Bill Power were defeated for positions.

Things did not get any better when C R Muhldorff, a Gair supporter, president of the State Service Union and vice-president of the QCE tried to turn the clock back by moving for the establishment 'of an efficient organised fighting force in trade unions to combat communism.' His attempt to re-establish the legitimacy of the groups (official endorsement of which had been withdrawn at the Federal Conference in 1955, although they could still operate legally within the unions, albeit without using the title 'ALP' and without the official sanction of the party) almost lapsed for want of a seconder: a bloodless amendment from Egerton reaffirming the ALP's opposition to Communism was easily carried.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> *Official record of the Queensland Labor-in-Politics convention*, 1956, p 68.

<sup>18</sup> Murphy, 'The 1957 Split', p 501.

A motion for party unity had the opposite effect, with Bukowski and Walsh launching into attacks and counterattacks on their opposing factions. Shortly before lunch on Wednesday Devereux moved the most important motion of the convention, that leave be increased to three weeks.

The motion was conciliatory and accommodating in the extreme. Devereux's motion did not lay down a specific timetable or make any reference to the convention's power to direct the government. Matters, however, took a grim turn for Gair when Vince Hefferan, secretary of the extremely moderate Shop Assistants Union, amended Devereux's motion, providing that the Act would be amended in 1956 and take effect from 1 January 1957. Leo Connolly, a strong supporter of the groups and representative of another non-militant union, the Railway Traffic Employees Union, seconded Hefferan's amendment. Like Hefferan, Connolly also wanted a definite time limit on the introduction of the extra weeks' leave.<sup>19</sup> The fact that this had come from representatives of tamer unions showed how out of touch the Gair faction was and how widely discontent with the Gair government had permeated the union movement.

Gair now spoke, supporting Devereux's motion but opposing the amendment. He did not oppose the concept of the extra weeks' leave itself, but he objected to the QCE direction to do it at a certain time, arguing that the amendment was both unconstitutional, and contrary to the ALP platform which recognised the supremacy of Parliament. He told the Convention that if it directed the government on the timing

---

<sup>19</sup> *Labor-in-Politics convention 1956*, pp 75-105, 107, 133-134; Murphy, 'The 1957 Split', p 502.

of amending legislation ‘you members of this Convention would be a party to the unconstitutional decision and to an unconstitutional act.’<sup>20</sup>

Other speakers followed the premier and supported Hefferan. When Egerton came to speak, he conceded explicitly that there was some substance in Gair’s arguments. He said: ‘I think that there is much logic in what the premier says but the time for logic has disappeared’ and that the convention should give a direction to the government because without it the QCE’s authority would be lessened. Even Egerton, however, partially skirted around the issue of whether a convention should direct a government by saying ‘We are not directing the government: we are directing those members of the Parliamentary Labor Party and members of the Parliamentary Labor Party will carry out the rules or be dealt with.’<sup>21</sup> Gerry Goding, a senior AWU official, further amended that the premier should include three weeks’ leave in his policy speech and assure electors that it would be introduced during the first session of the new Parliament, although he added carefully that his amendment was not in any way to be construed as a direction to the government.

Jack Duggan, minister for transport and Gair’s deputy entered the debate in an attempt to bridge the gap between the two sides. Duggan had not supported the extra weeks’ leave because of the costs involved but conceded that Convention technically had authority to direct the PLP. ‘I am not too arrogant to accept a direction’, he declared.

---

<sup>20</sup> Murphy, ‘The 1957 Split’, p 502: Colin Hughes, *Images and issues: the Queensland state elections of 1963 and 1966*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1969, p 5. Gair had, of course, long recognized the supremacy of Parliament. On 11 October 1938 he said in the House: ‘I feel that people ... recognize that the abolition of the parliamentary system of government would only offer an alternative system that would deprive them of the liberty they now enjoy.’ *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 11 October 1938, p 793.

<sup>21</sup> *Labor-in-Politics convention 1956*, p 83. The following account of the debate is drawn from this source, and from Murphy, ‘The 1957 Split’, pp 502-506.



But another delegate, soon to be his arch foe, was. Walsh, who followed eight other delegates who supported either Devereux or Hefferan, declared, ominously and presciently, 'I am prepared to ignore a direction from this body, or any other body.'

When the Convention voted, Hefferan's amendment was defeated on the voices, but Goding's, which was very similar to that of Hefferan, was then moved. As Goding's amendment was seconded, Boland, in the chair, closed the debate before any discussion could take place and called for a division.

Few single actions have altered the course of Queensland political history more than Boland's unremarked upon decision to adjourn the debate. His motives in doing so were never questioned: the reason or reasons for doing so are uncertain, but are likely to have been mundane. Perhaps he felt the amendment, which had now become a motion, was too similar to Hefferan's to warrant further discussion. It is more than likely he was by now feeling tired: the hour was late and he was not well. (He would die in four months.) Any or all of these factors could have motivated Boland to call for the division rather further debate. He would never know that his action would leave both Gair and the QCE in an imbroglio that would destroy the power that both wielded through being in government.

Goding's amendment, now a motion) was carried 75-58. At that moment, Goding's codicil notwithstanding, the premier had been officially instructed by the plenary governing body of his party to introduce amending leave legislation, something that he had just averred was 'an unconstitutional act.' Although it was late at night, Gair summoned a Cabinet meeting to consider the position. He and Walsh tried to talk the

whole Cabinet into resigning to force a rescission of Goding's motion, but this stratagem was dropped when five of his eleven ministers refused to resign. When the leave issue was considered at this meeting, Gair and Duggan spoke against it on financial grounds, with Duggan saying that the railways could not carry it, and that workers already on three weeks leave would now want four.

Only one Gair minister supported three weeks' leave. In the *Sunday Truth* of 23 April 1961 Attorney General Bill Power recalled how he found himself in a minority of one, but felt duty bound to abide by the majority view. He suggested a compromise whereby Gair would get the principal protagonists together, and nominate a day in the future from when the three weeks' leave would apply. Gair would not agree.

Realising his boss would not be budged, Power told Gair to tell the party that the Cabinet decision was unanimous. When they and the rest of the pro-Gair forces returned to convention that day, they recognized that they were outnumbered, offering no opposition to the election of prominent members of the anti-Gair group to the federal conference. Gair also withdrew his nomination for a federal executive position, probably saving himself from the humiliation of a sitting premier losing a ballot at his party's convention.

Humbling as this must have been, Gair had not conceded defeat on the three weeks' leave issue. As the convention moved towards a close, Gair reported on the meeting of the previous night, and told delegates: 'Cabinet considered the matter very carefully and unanimously decided that, having regard to all factors and circumstances, it did not accept the direction contained in the resolution.' A convention committee, headed by Bukowski and including Devereux and Egerton,

was immediately formed to meet with Gair and Duggan. Gair privately assured the committee that he would include three weeks' leave in his policy speech as long as he did not have to mention it specifically, but instead couch it in the context of general social and industrial welfare.<sup>22</sup> A year later, Duggan recalled:

*When he met the committee, Mr Gair said he would introduce the leave during the first session of Parliament. But he appealed to the committee not to embarrass him politically.*

*He wanted to go to the people as the strong man – as long as he could get back to power with the assurance there would be no opposition from the unions.*

*Mr Gair then turned to me and said 'Don't you agree?', whereupon I said 'Yes, unless there is some economic retrogression.'*<sup>23</sup>

Gair's recollection was different. 'I deny that I gave any such unconditional pledge. All I gave was an undertaking to introduce such legislation conditional on the financial situation being favourable.'<sup>24</sup> Gair proclaimed his innocence in even more strident terms in a pamphlet he had privately printed. 'Never did I make that promise, secretly or otherwise, and the people who claim I did are malicious liars. That lie was concocted and propagated by those unscrupulous totalitarianists ...'<sup>25</sup> An ALP advertisement outlining their version of what had happened appeared in the *Courier-Mail* of 27 April 1957. Convention delegates Bukowski, Pont, Egerton, Whiteside, Duggan, Devereux, Maxwell and Chalmers all claimed that Gair had, in fact, given a pledge. In the words of the advertisement, all 'agree that he gave a definite and unequivocal undertaking that three weeks's leave would be implemented. All agree

---

<sup>22</sup> Murphy, p 506.

<sup>23</sup> *Courier-Mail* 17 May 1957.

<sup>24</sup> *Courier-Mail* 14 May 1957.

<sup>25</sup> Gair, V C. *Star Chamber revived!* [South Brisbane, Q: The Author, 1957], p 2.

that he asked that this not be made public because he thought it would embarrass him.’

Many years later, another version of the meeting emerged that was quite different. In 1992, George Pont, one of the Convention delegates that met with Gair recalled that ‘Gair sort of gave in’ but Duggan protested strongly to his chief. ‘Mr Premier, do you know what you’ve done to the budget for the Railway Department? You’ve killed the Railway, that actual three weeks annual leave will destroy the Railway.’ When Pont asked Duggan whose side he was on, the deputy premier and minister for transport continued to protest that Gair had destroyed the Railway budget. Duggan and Pont continued their verbal sparring until, according to Pont: ‘[A]ll of a sudden, Gair turned to me and said: ‘I’ll introduce three weeks’ annual leave; come down to the pub and we’ll drink on it.’<sup>26</sup>

If Pont’s recollection is accurate, it illustrates the degree of political agility that Duggan displayed in 1957, given his support for three weeks’ leave after the split. Certainly three weeks’ leave would have had a negative effect on the already depleted railway budget, even if many of the railway workers were already enjoying three weeks leave. On the other hand, Pont and whoever else witnessed the argument had little reason to publicise Duggan’s hostility towards three weeks’ leave in the context of an election campaign when he had, no matter what his earlier thoughts, words or deeds, remained loyal to the Australian Labor Party. However, Gair’s Attorney General, Bill Power, was under no such restraints, and he claimed Duggan was one of

---

<sup>26</sup> Mark Hearn and Harry Knowles, *One big union: a history of the Australian Workers Union 1886-1994*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p 253. However, at this stage, as Egerton said at the 1956 Labor-in-Politics Convention, ‘thousands of public servants and railway workers’ were already getting three weeks leave. *Official record of the Queensland Labor-in-Politics convention*, 1956, p 54.

the most vocal opponents of three weeks' leave, reversing his stance 'when the whips were cracked.'<sup>27</sup> 'We all knew', Gair said during the campaign, 'and none better than Mr Duggan – that the granting of such leave would place a most damaging burden on the finances of the state.'<sup>28</sup>

It had been an eventful convention, and as business wound up on the last day, no delegate could have thought that the three weeks' leave matter had been resolved satisfactorily. But the onus was on the party to show unity, and polite and encouraging words could, at least, be temporarily placed in harness to give the impression that the warring interests in the party were united in common cause.

It was party president Bukowski who uttered the final words of the convention. They were directed personally to Gair. As the pair observed the customary professional civilities, they both must have known that Bukowski's words were about as ironic as he could have made them:

*Mr Gair, I desire to give you a vote of complete confidence in your position of Premier and Leader of the Queensland Political Labor Party, and extend to you and the Queensland government all the assistance that is possible from our organization and financial support of the forthcoming elections.*<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> *Courier-Mail* 18 July 1957.

<sup>28</sup> *Courier-Mail* 9 July 1957.

<sup>29</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 12 June 1957, p 72.

### 7.3 THE ELECTION OF 1956

Gair delivered his policy speech at the City Hall in Brisbane on 24 April. Although he reminded Queensland electors of the improvements to long service leave and sick leave, Gair did not mention three weeks' leave in his policy speech. The Labor party exhorted at least one group, shop assistants, to vote the Gair government back if they wanted three week's leave in the future.<sup>30</sup> Twelve days out from the election of 19 May, Bukowski reminded the members of his union that 'in the political field, old time Labor politicians were regarded as the bulwark for the industrial unions, and we would be fools, indeed, if we did not regard our politicians in the same light.'<sup>31</sup> The politicians may have been indispensable to the AWU, but for the first time, the union did not financially contribute to the election fund. Ever resourceful, Gair contributed £12 000, acquired from undisclosed sources, and handed it over to campaign directors in a brown paper bag.<sup>32</sup>

In the circumstances, it was an excellent result for Gair. There was a two percent swing against the government, but only one marginal seat was lost, and all the 'high water' gains of 1953 were retained. Gair told reporters on election night that he was 'as happy as a sandboy' with the victory: Nell Gair said that Labor's return was made by a secret weapon, the grace of God.<sup>33</sup>

A victorious Gair was at pains to give the impression of unity. 'I am proud of the magnificent unanimity of purpose and close cooperation that was so evident between

---

<sup>30</sup> *Labor News* April 1956.

<sup>31</sup> *Worker* 7 May 1956.

<sup>32</sup> Ross McMullin, *The light on the hill: the Australian Labor Party 1891-1991*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1991, p 283.

<sup>33</sup> *Sunday Mail* 20 May 1956.

the political and industrial sections of our party.’<sup>34</sup> Bukowski was also at some pains to create the impression of unity between the industrial and political wings of the party, and lambasted the conservative press for trying to ‘cause a rift among Labor’s followers by using me as a goad, and by suggesting that I was telling Mr Gair what to do and that Mr Gair was taking instructions from me.’ He continued, it seems somewhat verbosely and breathlessly:

*Fortunately, the Labor Movement knows that no matter who the leader is, he must carry out the decisions of the majority, and although the decisions at the Mackay Convention were ‘flogged’ into this campaign, the suggestion being that the State Labor government was being told what to do about liquor laws, horse racing, improved worker’s conditions and such like, and THAT amounted to dictation by an outside body, we in the Labor movement knew that Labor policy had been decided at Mackay and that if a Labor government was re-elected it would be the obligation and duty of that government to carry out those verdicts by putting them into legislative effect.*<sup>35</sup>

To most observers, it appeared that the Gair government was back for three more years. By the time less than half of that period had elapsed, it would be history. As Gair and Bukowski spoke these words, a bitter strike that would cleave their two sides apart forever was already underway.

#### **7.4 THE PASTORAL STRIKE: ‘BUKOWSKI VS GAIR IN 1956’**

The Byzantine machinations of the events surrounding the shearer’s strike were a major signpost on Gair’s road to destruction. The events surrounding the strike were complex ones. In her foreword to her thesis, the most complete, albeit unpublished

---

<sup>34</sup> *Labor News* 6 June 1956.

<sup>35</sup> *Worker* 21 May 1956.

account of the strike, Anne McMurchy attempted to fashion, ‘in a more or less cohesive form’ a series of complex events, but:

*the raw mix of tough politicians, old-time union bosses and coldly efficient Trades Hall leaders with ‘old’ and ‘new’ shearers, incensed graziers, and nervous and irritable country townspeople defies logical analysis.*<sup>36</sup>

The next year, when other issues were occupying his attention, Gair would put his view on the strike much more succinctly: ‘The shearer’s strike was the greatest farce in the industrial life of Queensland.’<sup>37</sup>

The strike was to form the backdrop for another round of the longrunning clash between two personalities, Gair and Joe Bukowski. Presciently, and from a distance, the *Sydney Morning Herald* remarked on 12 October 1956 that ‘it was clear that the strike would be settled, but not the private war between Mr Gair and Mr Bukowski.’

Tom Hiley later described the strike as:

*irritation tactics against Gair. That was the basic motivation; sure, there was a wages issue ... that was what was plucked out of the hat in public justification. [But] The real basis motivation in my mind was Bukowski versus Gair in 1956.*<sup>38</sup>

Wool prices had soared in the first half of the 1950s for a variety of reasons, prominent among them demand created by the Korean War. A prosperity loading had been granted, but with the end of hostilities, there was an end to need for military stockpiling of the commodity and prices fell. In November 1955 the United Graziers’ Association applied for a reduction of 15 percent in shearer’s wages. In response, the Court reduced the minimum wages for shearers by 10 percent from 1 January 1956.

Many shearers refused to work at the new rates: Frank Nolan, of the Australian

---

<sup>36</sup> Anne McMurchy, ‘The Queensland Shearer’s Strike of 1956’, Bachelor of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1977, p 11.

<sup>37</sup> *Courier-Mail* 15 July 1957.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas Hiley Interview 1:2/18. Suzanne Walker, National Library of Australia 1974.



Railway Union, who addressed meetings of shearers at Longreach and Charleville throughout the strike, recalled how ‘Those in work at the old rates levied themselves heavily to help the men who were unemployed.’ Unsurprisingly, Nolan’s feelings towards the graziers’ representatives were not positive and he remembered them as ‘the most irrational, arrogant, autocratic collection that could be found anywhere.’<sup>39</sup>

‘Scab’ shearers were hired, some being flown in from the south to shear at the new rates, with lures like travelling expenses and free beer and cigarettes, that, the AWU argued, meant that they were effectively being paid at the old rate or higher. Members of unions associated with the handling of wool refused to handle consignments shorn at the new rates. Railway freight losses averaged £100 000 a month, although transport minister Jack Duggan refused to take punitive action against Railway Department employees. In all, 26 unions refused to handle the products of non-union labour. Gair, under pressure from the press, the UGA and the Opposition, remained relatively calm: ‘Wool is not perishable. We will move it if and when we can.’<sup>40</sup>

Although the AWU had been generally happy with the processes of arbitration for decades, it was understandably unhappy with the reduction of wages at the Court’s behest. At the Annual Delegate meeting of the AWU in February 1956, AWU President Harry Boland accused the Court of anti-worker bias in relation to the Shearing Award Application, saying that ‘it was obvious that the Industrial Court went out of its way to bolster up the case for the employers in answer to the Union’s submission.’<sup>41</sup> Boland then left the chair to move a motion that the AWU Branch Executive interview Gair, Duggan, Walsh and Minister for Labour and Industry

---

<sup>39</sup> Frank Nolan, *You pass this way only once*, p 126.

<sup>40</sup> *Telegraph* 21 March 1956.

<sup>41</sup> *Worker* 20 February 1956.

Arthur Jones to discuss the situation, and that if an interview could not be arranged, the membership of the AWU be balloted 'to ascertain if they are desirous of continuing to seek improved wages and working conditions per medium of arbitration or whether they would prefer to negotiate directly with employers.'<sup>42</sup>

The motion was carried unanimously. Nothing better demonstrates the breakdown of communications between the Gair government and the AWU than the proposal of the action to be taken if Gair and his ministers declined to grant an interview.

The strike provided a catalyst for dialogue between representatives of two old adversaries from within the Queensland labour movement. Sometime before the end of February 1956, Bukowski and Harry Boland had met with TLC executives to discuss the strike. Faced with the common adversary in the form of the United Grazier's Association, the gathering reached agreement on the part that the transport unions would play in preventing the movement of wool shorn under conditions other than those determined by the AWU.<sup>43</sup> The cooperative spirit between the two would, however, prove a fateful component for Vince Gair in the turbulent months to come, with ramifications far beyond the dispute.

Matters took a new turn on 3 July when the court struck out the preference clause in the shearing award. This meant that the legal obligation of shearers to become members of the AWU was now removed. The AWU called on the government to force the dispute back to the court for settlement in the form of an increase in rates. The union also called on Labor members of parliament for help, unsubtly reminding those in rural electorates that the assistance of AWU organisers could be most helpful

---

<sup>42</sup> *Worker* 20 February 1956.

<sup>43</sup> *Worker* 27 February 1956.

during plebiscites.<sup>44</sup> Cabinet discussed the strike, but Gair said ‘that the government was prepared to assist within the limits of its constitutional authority, but this could not include Court intervention.’<sup>45</sup> On 3 August, Major Towner, VC, had a letter published in the *Longreach Leader* saying that Gair should have been doing more to stop the strike. Gair submitted a scathing reply to Towner in the *Worker* on 27

August:

*It is nonsense to label shearers as strikers because they decline to work for new rates. In a democracy it is every man’s right to refuse to work if he considers the payment inadequate.*

*What action does Major Towner want the government to take – dragoon shearers into working for ‘new rate’ employers under the threat of machine guns or other strong-arm tactics used with such alacrity by Queensland graziers of last century?*

Gair’s reply shows that he still had more than a little sympathy with the strikers, and replied to Towner’s implication of timidity: ‘As for my guts, or lack of it, I am content to allow the people to decide, based on my record both as a minister and a member of the Australian Labor Party.’

In early September Gair crossed the Rubicon. Millions of pounds worth of wool were lying idle in warehouses throughout Queensland. It would be only too easy for his enemies to condemn him, but Gair had his wider duties to consider: it is difficult not to feel sympathy for him at this juncture. Gair had no real wish to interfere, and did not fully believe that he had a right to, as a private letter to a friend at the time shows:

*[T]he graziers are almost as much to blame as the AWU officials, but the dispute can only end by the union lifting its bans and getting back into the Court. If any other course was adopted, our whole industrial machinery would go overboard. I have tried my utmost to solve this dispute, even though it is one in which I should not be really interfering, the matter being one between*

---

<sup>44</sup> *Sunday Mail* 16 September 1956.

<sup>45</sup> *Courier-Mail* 5 July 1956.

*the Court and the parties concerned. However, as Premier of this State I cannot sit idly by and see the economy of Queensland completely disrupted.*<sup>46</sup>

Although ever since it has been put about that he approached an old adversary, the Acting Prime Minister and Leader of the Country Party, Artie Fadden, for help in transporting all wool, 'black' and 'white', federal minister for labour Harold Holt substantiated in the House of Representatives that Gair had communicated with the Australian Woolbuyer's Association, following which they had contacted Fadden.<sup>47</sup> Gair's enemies, however, were not too concerned with the niceties surrounding the liaison. The way they saw it, conferring with the class enemy on the matter of neutralising the effects of a strike was virtually unforgivable. Bukowski said, in a broadcast from the Queensland ALP's radio station, 4KQ: 'As a Labor Premier, Mr Gair should understand that once a man steps across the line against the people within the Labor Movement, it is very, very hard to step back again.'<sup>48</sup> Tom Dougherty, federal secretary of the AWU, chimed in from Sydney:

*By Gair going to Labor's political enemies ... with the object of having the military put into Queensland in an attempt to defeat a just and proper approach by the trade unionists in Queensland to the pastoral dispute, he has shown that he is completely incompetent to carry out the duties required of him as a Labor Premier.*<sup>49</sup>

Gair, however, saw the duties of a premier as having a wider scope, and Dougherty's bluster did not phase him:

*I am not going to be bulldozed or hectorated by Mr Dougherty or by anyone else into deviating from my duty to Queensland...Mr Dougherty should confine his*

---

<sup>46</sup> Gair to Jack McGinley 27 September 1956. Gair Papers, Series 1 Correspondence Box 1 Folder 4. National Library of Australia.

<sup>47</sup> *Western Star* (Roma) 12 October 1956.

<sup>48</sup> *Worker* 10 September 1956; *Courier-Mail* 7 September 1956.

<sup>49</sup> *Worker* 10 September 1956.

*activities to running the AWU instead of trying to dictate to the Queensland government.*<sup>50</sup>

Also in September the Storemen and Packers Union asked Gair to intervene as their members would suffer from the impending cancellation of the October wool sales. They had been dismissed early in the strike for refusing to handle 'black' wool, but had returned to work. The TLC Disputes Committee was pressuring them to refuse to handle wool for the October sales.<sup>51</sup>

Gair called another conference between all the parties involved, the AWU and TLC Disputes Committee on one hand and the UGA on the other. By Bukowski's later account to the disputes committee, Gair asked the AWU to state its case first, giving the UGA, in Bukowski's view, a tactical advantage. The union asked for £7/9/6 a 100 sheep, an increase of ten shillings. The UGA agreed, but only if the union agreed to delete penalty rates for statutory holidays. The union refused. Transport Minister Jack Duggan now stepped in and strongly urged the graziers to agree to a rate of £7/12/6, which represented a three shilling margin over the Federal award, a traditional factor in Queensland shearing rates in comparison with the rest of the country.<sup>52</sup> The graziers, however, did not accept this proposal. Matters were not assisted when the press reported Gair as saying that the UGA and the unions had supported £7/9/6 a 100 sheep as an interim award.<sup>53</sup> Bukowski hotly denied this and accused the premier of being on the side of the graziers.<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>50</sup> *Advertiser* (Adelaide) 7 September 1956.

<sup>51</sup> *Sunday Mail* 16 September 1956.

<sup>52</sup> Joy Guyatt, 'The Labor Government and the Queensland Shearer's Strike of 1956', *Labour History* no 35 November 1977, p 61.

<sup>53</sup> *Telegraph* 29 September 1956.

<sup>54</sup> TLC Disputes Committee, *Minutes*, 1 October 1956. Fryer Library: *Telegraph* 29 September 1956.

After a Trades Hall meeting involving thirty-two unions affirmed solidarity with the shearers<sup>55</sup> the Governor proclaimed a State of Emergency under the 1938 *State Transport Act*. An Order-in-Council directed members of the Storemen and Packers' Union and AWU working under Wool Industry Awards to return to work. Picketing was made illegal. Gair's action had broad support from the other members of the Parliamentary Labor Party. Caucus endorsed the premier's action 32-15.<sup>56</sup> But from Sydney, Tom Dougherty, federal secretary of the AWU, was scathing in his condemnation of Gair, whose anti-picketing legislation was 'typical of the Liberal Party leaders' and placed the premier firmly 'in collaboration with the enemies of the trade union movement.' Dougherty, who had a penchant for garish ties and liked to write letters in doggerel verse to his mother,<sup>57</sup> said of Gair:

*He has decided to fight the true Labour movement. He has done that only after consultation with the graziers and wool merchants. He did not consult the union before he introduced the emergency legislation, nor did he invite them to a conference.*<sup>58</sup>

Bukowski, Egerton and other members of the Disputes Committee met with Gair and Duggan to discuss the State of Emergency. Gair told them that he intended to have an application made for the award to be reviewed in the Court. If the unions lifted the bans the AWU could, under the emergency powers, have its application heard in the Court, although since its deregistration it had had no standing with the Court. Egerton asked that the Public Service Commissioner, Douglas Fraser, provide a fair case to the Court for a rate of £7/17/3, and Gair agreed that Fraser would do so.<sup>59</sup> Storemen and

---

<sup>55</sup> *Courier-Mail* 2 October 1956

<sup>56</sup> Lack, *Three decades of Queensland political history*, p 444: *Courier-Mail* 5 October 1956, *Telegraph* 4 October 1956.

<sup>57</sup> 'Dougherty of the AWU' *People* 28 February 1951.

<sup>58</sup> *Courier-Mail* 5 October 1956.

<sup>59</sup> TLC Disputes Committee. *Minutes* 10 October 1956.

Packers Union and AWU members were ordered back to work with penalties of up to £100 for failing to obey. Incensed, Bukowski wrote:

*Mr Gair's extraordinary powers ... giving authority to punish men involved in the shearing dispute if they remained loyal to trade union and Labor principles is one of the greatest examples of non-Labor action that this State has seen since the tragic days of 1912 ...*<sup>60</sup>

Despite Egerton's remark of the storemen: 'These boys will stick. Don't have the slightest doubt about that',<sup>61</sup> the men returned to work. Gair was understandably pleased with this outcome:

*I am pleased that the majority of storemen and packers had the courage and good sense to accept the government's direction to return to work. In doing so, they are proving themselves to be good Australians, conscious of the necessity of preserving their standards of living which are indisputably related to the economy of this State and this country.*<sup>62</sup>

When the case came before the Industrial Court in mid-October Mr Justice Brown settled on a rate of £7/11/-, the rate in New South Wales. Bukowski agreed to recommend that the AWU accept the rate, provided that the scab labour was withdrawn and there was no victimisation of workers.<sup>63</sup>

The strike was over, with the workers the victors, but the dispute was an important milestone on the way to the Labor split. Securing assistance from his political opponents to handle 'black' wool was a public relations disaster for Gair, but it is abundantly clear that he needed to do so because of the obduracy of others, and acted only after he had tried other options to end the acute disruption to the flow of state revenue. His relationship with Bukowski far surmounted the issues of wool prices and shearers' wages, and there was no doubt who he meant when Gair declared in the

---

<sup>60</sup> *Worker* 8 October 1956.

<sup>61</sup> *Telegraph* 6 October 1956.

<sup>62</sup> *Telegraph* 6 October 1956.

<sup>63</sup> *Sunday Mail* 14 October 1956.

*Telegraph* of 8 October 1956: '[S]ome union leaders, driven by their insensate lust for dictatorial power, are vindictively determined to destroy me politically.' Twenty years after, Duggan confirmed that the government would have intervened much earlier, its constitutional inability to intervene in the affairs of the Industrial Court notwithstanding, had there not been such a palpable antagonism between Gair and Bukowski.<sup>64</sup> In her study of the strike, Anne McMurchy blamed Bukowski for prolonging the strike for reasons of his own:

*The longer the strike went on, the more bitterness was injected into the whole scene, and given this set of circumstances, Bukowski's self-imposed task of keeping the kettle of mutual animosity on the boil remained relatively easy. His vendetta against the graziers was a minor, but vital component in his plan to demonstrate to the Labor movement, and Premier Gair in particular, who the real 'boss' of the ALP in Queensland was.*<sup>65</sup>

Jack Egerton told McMurchy years later that there were several occasions when the strike was very close to being settled, but deliberate provocation from Bukowski inflamed the situation again.<sup>66</sup> Bukowski's rhetoric at times was that of a man who was, at the very least, drawing something of a long bow in terms of logic.<sup>67</sup> But as McMurchy stated:

*Such was his grip on sections of the AWU that he was able to continue his tirades, containing always a proportion of half-truths and distortions, with seemingly no opposition from either officials or rank and file members.*<sup>68</sup>

While it could be argued that Gair's handling of the strike was reasonably adept<sup>69</sup>, in that the emergency action was shortlived, and the outcome was a victory for the

---

<sup>64</sup> Guyatt, 'The Labor Government and the Queensland Shearer's Strike of 1956', p 63.

<sup>65</sup> McMurchy, 'The Queensland Shearer's Strike of 1956', p 75.

<sup>66</sup> McMurchy, 'The Queensland Shearer's Strike of 1956', p 88.

<sup>67</sup> Bukowski reminded the graziers for the need to recognize the importance of shearers, saying that without them it might have been necessary to rely on Chinese labour, 'and today we might have been overrun by the Japanese in the last war had we been anything but a White Australia.' *Worker* 19 March 1956.

<sup>68</sup> McMurchy, 'The Queensland Shearer's Strike of 1956', p 78.

<sup>69</sup> Costar, 'Vincent Clair Gair: Labor's Loser', p 275.



workers on whose side he ostensibly was on, it would be for political rather than industrial reasons that the shearers' dispute would acquire longterm significance. The unlikely alliance between the AWU and the TLC at union level and Bukowski and Egerton on a personal level was strengthened, to Gair's detriment, by the dispute. Gair also lost a significant amount of prestige within his own power base, the Parliamentary Labor Party, as the dispute went on, as evidenced by data from the Caucus minutes that Brian Costar collected.<sup>70</sup> But for now, at least, he was unrepentant of his actions: 'I did not receive my commission as Premier to bow to men who are proposed to gamble with Queensland's economy.'<sup>71</sup> Although he was referring specifically to the shearers' strike, his declaration could be applied with equal validity to the burgeoning issue of three weeks' leave.

## **7.5 THREE WEEKS LEAVE: FOR AND AGAINST**

There was ambivalence associated with the economic logistics of introducing three weeks' leave at this time. On the surface, the introduction of the reform seemed both affordable and equitable. A high proportion of the Queensland workforce already had three weeks' leave. State public servants, railway workers, and workers covered by Commonwealth awards already had three weeks' leave. Moreover, economic conditions were generally buoyant. Even elements of the Liberal party apparently had positive thoughts on the reform: it had been promised by them in a campaign advertisement almost a decade earlier,<sup>72</sup> although Country Party leader Nicklin was

---

<sup>70</sup> Costar, 'Vincent Clair Gair: Labor's Loser', p 276. 'When the strike became an issue in caucus in early September, Gair got his way unchallenged. On 3 October he easily won a ballot approving his conciliatory actions thirty-one to sixteen, but on the very next day his decision to order the storemen to return to work was carried by the much narrower margin of twenty-seven votes to twenty.'

<sup>71</sup> *Courier-Mail* 8 October 1956.

<sup>72</sup> *Courier-Mail* 14 December 1946, cited by Jack Duggan in *Courier-Mail* 15 July 1957.

against it: 'No government ... could possibly justify the granting of three weeks annual leave at this critical stage of the economy.'<sup>73</sup> Significantly, though, the conservative *Courier-Mail*, when the introduction of three week's leave was first mooted, said that the Gair government would be certain to introduce it, 'unless there is some economic slump.' The newspaper did not take the opportunity to attack the proposal on economic grounds.<sup>74</sup>

But not all was well in the state of Queensland. Late in August, the premier, evidently not in an expansive mood, warned Cabinet and a party meeting that 'he didn't want to hear this year of any hair-brained schemes costing money.'<sup>75</sup> The next month, his ambivalent feelings about the exact state of the economy were evident, when, in the absence (because of illness) of Treasurer Ted Walsh he had to present the Financial Statement. 'The States are experiencing some degree of financial stringency, the number of unemployed has increased, but the level of employment and economic activity have remained high during the year.' The Railway Department had had a particularly rough time in the previous twelve months. Floods, an overtime ban that affected the amount of material that could be shifted (thus decreasing revenue receipts) and the shearing strike had all contributed to a shortfall of railway receipts of £1.818 million, accounting for the major part of the shortfall of revenue receipts in general. Some monies had been transferred and economies affected in other areas to compensate, but Gair noted that these measures could not be repeated, and in any case did not make up for the decline in Railway receipts.<sup>76</sup>

---

<sup>73</sup> *Queensland parliamentary debates* 25 September 1956, p 578.

<sup>74</sup> *Courier-Mail* 5 March 1956.

<sup>75</sup> *Sunday Mail* 26 August 1956.

<sup>76</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 20 September 1956 p 542- 543.

Hard facts and figures in other areas tended to support the government case for economies, and must have brought back memories of the Depression for Gair and his Cabinet, all of who were old enough to remember it. The Forestry Department was preparing to sack 700 employees and the Railway Department was considering staff retrenchments as a cost-cutting measure.<sup>77</sup> The sackings of between 400 and 500 Housing Commission employees were foreshadowed in mid-March, but Walsh said he would try to find funds in the state coffers to keep them in jobs.<sup>78</sup> On 19 March 1957 Walsh would announce to Parliament that since 1 July 1956 it had been necessary, because of the shortage of funds, to reduce the number of Crown employees by 416 in the Forestry Department, 508 in the Irrigation Department, 300 in the Department of Public Works and 500 in the Department of Railways. In addition, the government was about to dismiss 400 building workers.<sup>79</sup> A plaintive letter to the *Courier-Mail* of 22 February 1957 from the bearer of the unlikely and lengthy pseudonym ‘Migration with Work and Homes, Caboolture’ confirmed just how difficult the employment situation was. ‘You could start north from Brisbane to Nambour, and try every shire office employment, Main Roads, Forestry and farmers, and you could not find employment. All departments have been putting men off for months.’

The workers were let go, and the retrenchments surfaced briefly in the campaign when the bombastic Liberal leader Ken Morris described the sackings as a ‘treacherous political plot’, designed to make the electorate believe that the government could not afford three week’s leave and that the Federal government was

---

<sup>77</sup> Murphy, ‘The Split in Queensland’, p 502.

<sup>78</sup> *Courier-Mail* 15 March 1957.

<sup>79</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 19 March 1957, p 1319.

starving the state government of funds.<sup>80</sup> Common sense would suggest, however, that a better way for the government to gain sympathy and thus votes would have been to keep the workers in employment.

Treasurer Walsh had budgeted for a small surplus in 1955-56 and would do so again in 1956-57, but he was also using cash reserves of £12 million, amassed during the war, to bridge the gap between income and expenditure. On the other hand, Queensland had done well from the Commonwealth tax reimbursements in 1956, receiving an additional £2.5 million. Walsh even conceded to the QCE that the government could have met the cost of the extra weeks' leave, but he and Gair argued that this could not be guaranteed for the following year and that it would be better to keep men employed with two weeks' leave rather than risk putting off some so that the remainder could enjoy three.<sup>81</sup> When the figures for the financial year 1955/56 became available, instead of the small surplus Walsh had predicted, and budgeted for, Queensland had a deficit of £1.7 million.<sup>82</sup> Gair then reverted to the argument that the state could not afford to introduce the amending legislation.

Little effort seems to have been made, however, to quantify the cost that an extra week's leave would entail. Long after the dust of the campaign had settled, Gair would argue that it was not possible for the state to bear the cost of the extra leisure and maintain its free hospital system, saying: 'If the wheel of fortune turns against the worker and his family, wherein lies the greater advantage – an extra week's leisure or a free hospital service?'<sup>83</sup> Safe in Sydney, and free from any possible consequences

---

<sup>80</sup> *Courier-Mail* 24 July 1957.

<sup>81</sup> Murphy, 'The 1957 Split', p 502-3.

<sup>82</sup> *Courier-Mail* 7 July 1956, cited in Brian Costar, 'Vincent Clair Gair: Labor's Loser', p 280.

<sup>83</sup> *Courier-Mail* 11 September 1958.

of any decision on three week's leave for Queensland, AWU President Tom Dougherty sneered that the cost would have been no more than £200 000 a year, and that the recent two shilling decrease in the basic wage would have provide half of this figure.<sup>84</sup> A few years later, with Gair and Labor out of power for over three years, Jack Egerton claimed that Gair's refusal to legislate for an extra week's leave had saved about £4 million pounds of employer's money.<sup>85</sup> Gair himself said that three week's leave would cost at least £400 000, and probably £1 250 000 'when its implications are fully worked out.'<sup>86</sup>

Two weeks before Gair's expulsion, 'Our Industrial Reporter' made a respectable attempt in the pages of the *Courier-Mail* at computing the costs, hampered at the outset by Gair having given the QCE two different estimates, £400 000 a year and £500 000 a year. 'Industrial Reporter' claimed, that some union officials and QCE members had calculated the costs to be even higher, £1 000 000. This ties in, however, with a party booklet in Gair's papers (Box 14) in the National Library, 'Political Notes for QLP Canvassers', that fixes the precise figure of £1.047 million. In another Gair pamphlet, the figure of £1 000 000 was given, but this figure included the cost of preserving relative margins to Crown employees already enjoying three weeks' leave as well as granting three weeks' leave to those who were not.<sup>87</sup>

The *Courier-Mail's* 'Our Industrial Reporter', partially armed with the annual report of the Public Service Commissioner, tried to calculate the likely costs. While the fact

---

<sup>84</sup> *Truth* 16 June 1957.

<sup>85</sup> *Telegraph* 28 October 1960. Egerton was commenting on the Nicklin government's appointing of Gair as a liaison officer in the secondary industries division of the Department of Labour and Industry, and said that it was 'a pay-off.' He did not elaborate as to how he arrived at the £4 million.

<sup>86</sup> *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney) 11 April 1957.

<sup>87</sup> *Electors of South Brisbane! Gair's fight is your fight! Stand by Labor's man of destiny!* Gair Papers, Series 7 Elections Box 7 Folder 61.National Library of Australia.

that there were approximately 66 000 Crown employees was easily ascertainable, ascertaining their leave entitlements was problematic. For example, in the railways, continuous shift workers and employees in the salaries section got three weeks. Many others got only two weeks at the commencement of employment, but got an extra day's leave for each year of service after eight years employment, to a maximum of three weeks leave after thirteen years. And that was just the railway department. However, after a process too long to elaborate upon here, 'Industrial Reporter' came up with the estimate of 24 665 state government workers on two weeks' leave.

Determining the same for private enterprise was simply not possible. Although the number of persons in private employment in Queensland was roughly estimated at 200 000, no central employer's authority could furnish the information of how many of those were on two weeks' leave and how many were on three. 'Industrial Reporter' made an educated guess of 135 000 on two weeks' leave.

Venturing briefly back into pure mathematics, the correspondent made the unassailable claim that if productivity was to be maintained, then one new worker needed to be engaged for every 49 whose annual leave entitlement went from two weeks to three. The government would thus need to employ 503 extra people, and at an average wage of £12 a week – a figure obtained by averaging out the wages for men, women, juniors and apprentices – they would need to find £313 872 a year. Private enterprise would need to find 2 743 more workers at a cost of £1 711 632 a year. If all workers retained their holiday margins, the costs would be appreciably higher.

High as these costs were, they were, however, based on the assumption that replacements had to be found to compensate for the absence of workers while they were enjoying their extra week's leave. But the need for replacement workers could have been ameliorated to a degree by employers scheduling leave for quieter periods, such as Christmas. In any case, to venture into pure mathematics again, workers only needed to work one-fortyninth harder to maintain their previous productivity, and it was likely that the extra week's leave would contribute to an improvement in health (thus less absenteeism) and a lessening of industrial fatigue. Moreover, the hoped for improvements in automation could be expected to take up some of the slack.<sup>88</sup>

No one would ever doubt that in 1957, Dougherty's £200 000, 'Industrial Reporter's' £313 872, and Gair's £400 000 or £500 000 or £1 250 000 was not a considerable amount of money, even for a government. But the problem of coping with wage rises was not a new one for the Gair government. In mid-1955 a police pay rise had cost the state £500 000, and the teachers had secured pay rises adding £750 000 to the wages bill. At that time, the possibility of the state having to find £3 500 000 for railway workers, and between £5 000 000 and £6 000 000 for various pending State Service Union claims in the Industrial Court was also aired in the papers.<sup>89</sup> In August 1956 a four shilling rise in the basic wage looked set to cost the government £640 000.<sup>90</sup> Had the extra weeks' leave been mandated by the Court, there would have been little that Gair and the Cabinet could have done, other than wear the cost as they had in the past and would do in the future.

---

<sup>88</sup> *Courier-Mail* 9 April 1957.

<sup>89</sup> *Sunday Mail* 3 July 1955.

<sup>90</sup> *Courier-Mail* 28 August 1956.

One piece of Labor party propaganda argued that the leave was easily affordable to employers. Factory profits were increasing, and for 1955-56 they totalled over £52 million. The net profits of 900 public companies, according to the *Australian Financial Review* for 3 January 1957, were £107.8 million. In January that year, Walsh had announced the spending of £650 000 on the construction of Bundaberg's deep water port – over twice the amount that 'Industrial Reporter' had estimated that the Gair government would need to spend to give workers three weeks' leave for one year. The government also had £2.7 million in the Unemployment Insurance Fund, which had not been drawn upon since before the war. According to the most recent Auditor-General's annual report, presented by Walsh to Parliament in October 1956, this fund was available to be expended, subject to approval and appropriation by Parliament.<sup>91</sup>

Gair, however, remained unmoved, and characteristically blinkered, either unwilling or unable to think things through, and more than likely thinking at least as much in terms of annoying his adversaries than in terms of economics. The judgment may seem harsh, but in cold mathematical terms, productivity in all areas could indisputably have been maintained had all workers improved their output by a little over two percent. Given the improved industrial health and morale and the likely decrease in absenteeism that an extra week's leave would have brought, the well attested to increases in productivity that mechanical advances were continuing to bring, the likelihood that a tweaking of workplace schedules could have greatly lessened the impact of the extra weeks' leave in many areas, that economic profits were healthy and that the government had access to at least some funds, Gair's

---

<sup>91</sup> *Why Gair was expelled!* Brisbane: Australian Labor Party, 1957. DLP collection, John Oxley Library.



reluctance to implement it seems less justifiable in economic terms than the impression he conveyed at the time. After all, as Bukowski and Bertie Milliner, head of the Printing Industry Employees Union and QCE delegate pointed out early in the dispute, had the unions taken their case to the Industrial Court and won, the government would have had no choice but to come up with the money.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, the extra week's leave could have led to benefits for other industries, most notably those associated with leisure and tourism, thus offsetting the expense of the change even more.

Duggan offered the three weeks' leave in his election policy, but did not focus overmuch on the costs associated with its implementation during his campaign, save to note that all reforms cost money in 'an age of improvement' and that like automation, three weeks' leave should be accepted.<sup>93</sup> Even a Gair minister, Attorney General Bill Power, claimed a few years later that the government could have afforded it.<sup>94</sup>

Gair himself was demonstrably aware of the remarkable improvements in worker productivity that could conceivably have made three weeks easier to bear. In 1947 he had justified the reduction of the working hours per week from 44 to 40, seeing the relevant bill as 'the logical development of the machine age, with its amazing capacity for mass production, with the minimum of manual effort and the replacement of manual labour.'<sup>95</sup> In his 'As I See It' column in the *Telegraph* of 12 September 1956 he cited studies showing that since 1939 output per person in Australian factories had

---

<sup>92</sup> *Courier-Mail* 12 November 1955.

<sup>93</sup> *Telegraph* 30 May 1957.

<sup>94</sup> Bill Power, 'For Labor – Unity at All Costs', *Sunday Truth* 23 April 1961.

<sup>95</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 16 September 1947, p 410.

risen 3.75 times and, even after allowing for changes in monetary values, real production per worker had risen by 43 per cent.

Typically, however, Gair remained unrepentant on his stance to the end, and as late as 1976 told a postgraduate student: 'As a good Labor man I could not reconcile sacking some poor wretch and at the same time giving permanent officials an additional weeks' leave.'<sup>96</sup>

In light of the above considerations, however, one wonders how many sackings the extra week's leave would have caused. Certainly it was in Gair's interest to maximise concerns over potential dismissals, but, extraordinarily, he does not seem to have ever considered that bringing in an extra weeks' leave would have not only enabled him to reclaim some of his prestige within his own party, tarnished as it was after the shearers' strike, but also won him support in other areas.

As Robert Murray has noted, Gair was unfortunate in that the three weeks' leave and shearing wages issues arose at a particularly difficult and transitional time. Wage and other claims had, for the thirty years up to the middle 1950s, been based on 'needs', relativities, and the cost of living, with automatic adjustments made quarterly.

Quarterly adjustments, however, were abolished in 1953, after several years of acute inflation. By the end of the 1950s, productivity and other value-related criteria brought big gains in award wages. In the transitional period, between these two periods, award wages tended to stagnate because there was no suitable criteria by which they could be measured and increased, but the cost of living continued to rise

---

<sup>96</sup> Margaret Jill Droughton, 'The University of Queensland Acts Amendment Act of 1957: a Case Study', Department of Government, Master of Public Administration Thesis, 1977, p 98. Droughton interviewed Gair on 11 December 1976.

steadily. There was a preponderance of state awards in Queensland, and, for obvious reasons, state wage-fixing authorities were more subject to political influence in a Labor-governed state, particularly in one that had been governed by Labor for most of the previous four decades.<sup>97</sup>

In the final analysis, however, perhaps it did not matter how much the introduction of three weeks' leave would have cost. Egerton sat next to Gair at the meeting which saw his expulsion, 'two Irish tempers exchanging brickbats, Gair never conciliatory, and Egerton, who never double-talked, not ever.' But in tapes recorded for the University of Queensland Egerton said:

*Three weeks' annual leave wasn't refused because we couldn't afford it. It was refused because Vince Gair and the people who controlled him were determined to show they wouldn't be stood over by the trade union movement and I suppose the trade union movement was equally determined.*<sup>98</sup>

---

<sup>97</sup> Robert Murray, *The split: Australian Labor in the fifties*. Melbourne: Cheshire, 1970, p 311.

<sup>98</sup> *National Times* 31 March 1979. In 2007, I was unable to locate the any reference to the tapes in the University of Queensland's online library catalogue.

## 7.6 LATE 1956: GAIR'S SUPPORT BASE DIMINISHES : OTHER CRISES

With the election over, Gair gave strong indications that he would legislate for the extra week's leave. He indicated to Bukowski's committee (the one formed at the convention to meet with Gair and Duggan on three weeks' leave) on 30 May that the legislation would be brought in. Two days later, he was part of the QCE that unanimously endorsed the inner executive's recommendation 'That in regard to the question of three weeks' annual leave, the QCE has every confidence that the Parliamentary Labor Party will carry out the policy of the Labor Party.' Twice, then, Gair was seen as saying that the measure would be introduced and the implication was that it would be soon. There was no widespread publicity over an exact time, but S Wright, the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemmen (AFULE) delegate to the QCE reported back to his union on 12 July that 'it does appear that legislation will be brought down in the first session of parliament.'<sup>99</sup>

The *Courier-Mail* had no doubt that three weeks' leave was on its way, reporting on 30 June that it was likely to be introduced soon. The paper went a little further on 18 August, saying that most observers felt that the government could grant the leave 'unless there is a rapid deterioration in the economy or a direct threat of mass unemployment' and that most Cabinet ministers believed that industry could carry the costs without any major threat to employment while economy measures could cushion the cost impact of the leave on the government. The measure was likely to be introduced before Christmas.

---

<sup>99</sup> Murphy, 'The 1957 Split', pp 506-507.

The ailing Harry Boland, state secretary of the AWU, died on 25 July 1956. He was remembered a few years later as 'one of those big-hearted men who travelled the outback stock routes, seeking AWU adherents': in his early years he had done much of his organising 'per bike.'<sup>100</sup> For Labor in Queensland his passing meant more than the removal of a likeable and stalwart party worker. With the death of the stolid and stable Boland, the political equilibrium changed when Joe Bukowski succeeded him: simultaneously serving as AWU secretary and president of the QCE, for a brief and eventful period he wielded almost unlimited power in the party and in the labour movement, with results that would be disastrous.

Parliament reconvened in August, for the first time since the election. There was no mention of three weeks' leave in the governor's speech, but the issue, like the fabled town of Tombstone, was too tough to die. On 31 August the QCE's Industrial Committee called on Gair in his office.<sup>101</sup>

Gair explained to Schmella, Bukowski, Goding, Devereaux and Egerton and the other members of the deputation the financial implications of introducing three weeks' leave. The estimates of all government departments had been cut 'to a total of something like three million pounds in the overall.' Three hundred men would lose their jobs in the Forestry department as would another couple of hundred in the Irrigation and Water Supply department. 'We have scraped the bottom of our financial pool as much as we could and are faced with the position of engaging in a campaign or programme of economy, hoping that by the saving of money in many

---

<sup>100</sup> *The 'Worker's first seventy years: souvenir*, Brisbane: The Worker, 1960, p 68.

<sup>101</sup> The transcript of the meeting is in Gair's papers. 'Notes of a Deputation from the Queensland Central Executive Industrial Committee Which Waited on the Premier (Hon V C Gair MLA) at the Premier's Office, Brisbane on Friday 31<sup>st</sup> August, 1956 at 11 am.' Gair Papers, Series 1 Correspondence Box 2 Folder 17, National Library of Australia.

ways, by Ministers putting emphasis on economy, we might be able to save the jobs of some people.’ The government had considered raising taxes through increasing levies associated with land tax, probate and succession duties (which were already higher than in other states), and stamp duties and entertainment, the latter which Gair was unwilling to do because of potential unpopularity. The government had even looked at the curtailment of expenditure in public hospitals. The cost of running the police department was increasing rapidly, as in this period the force was converting from pushbikes to motorcycles. Gair concluded with an appeal to the committee: ‘To give you any assurance now would be just misleading you and I am not given to that. As responsible men I know you will appreciate the position we are in.’

At Gair’s request, Duggan confirmed the figures that the premier had provided. Bukowski was underwhelmed: ‘The only ones that get put off are the labourers while the heads walk around.’ Gair replied, without promising anything: ‘That angle will be kept in mind.’ Egerton said that while Gair’s statement was factual, there was a contradiction in that outside industries were having ‘their greatest boom’, and the metal trades were showing record profits. In Egerton’s view, there was ‘no way in which outside industries could not bear the cost of three weeks leave.’ But Gair was unmoved by this contention, and reminded Egerton that the government could not legislatively compel outside employers to bring in three weeks’ leave if the government did not do it themselves, and that three weeks’ leave in the public service would cost the government £ 400 000. The meeting concluded, presumably to the satisfaction of no one.

In September a special meeting of the Labor party's Executive Committee was convened. The Executive Committee consisted of Bukowski, as President, Whiteside, Gair, Duggan, Egerton, Dittmer and Schmella. It decided to write to the Labor parliamentarians asking if they were willing to carry out the party platform and to implement legislation for three week's leave in 1956. Duggan and Gair opposed the decision, which involved formally writing to themselves, but they were overruled, and the Committee wrote to them and other members of the parliamentary party. Twenty parliamentarians replied that they would obey the rules and legislate to implement the leave, but twenty-seven would not agree to it. The QCE thus had an early indication of the numbers: almost all of the respondents followed the same course eight months later.

On 12 October the QCE considered the replies, and heard a report from Bukowski. The QCE reaffirmed its decision that three weeks' leave was 'practicable and desirable', thus half agreeing with Gair. They also reminded the PLP members that convention decisions were 'mandatory upon all members of the ALP'.<sup>102</sup>

Also in October, Gair informed the QCE yet again that state finances would not permit three weeks' leave. With the adjournment of Parliament in November to the following March, the issue was allowed to fester. Events unrelated to the leave dispute combined to whittle away at Gair's majority within the caucus. The QCE

---

<sup>102</sup> Guyatt, 'Trade Unions and the Australian Labor Party in Queensland', p 251. At the time of the letter, the PLP consisted of 48 members. Len Eastment (Ithaca) had just died and the man who would replace him, Labor's Pat Hanlon, only son of the late Premier, had not yet been elected. All 48 responded except for Jim Burrows (Port Curtis), who was ill at the time. After some deliberation, Burrows later joined the official Labor group, the last member of the 1957 caucus to make up his mind. All others gave a clear indication of their later actions, except for Duggan, and Eric Lloyd (Kedron), who, although they indicated in September 1956 that they would not help to legislate for three weeks' annual leave, later changed their minds and supported the official Labor party rather than the Gair group.

suspended one pro-Gair member, Harold Gardner (Rockhampton) for his criticism of that body, and another, Tom Foley (Belyando, a former minister for lands) was expelled from the party over allegations of corruption into Crown leaseholds. Len Eastment (Ithaca), another member who had supported Gair on the leave issue died in July 1956. Pat Hanlon, son of Gair's former chief, replaced him at the by-election in December. Though Catholic and a member of the Federated Clerk's Union, the union to which Gair belonged, the younger Hanlon supported the QCE in the dispute. At the end of 1956, Gair's previously handy majority within the caucus was looking a lot less so.<sup>103</sup>

The two longterm and bitter adversaries, Gair and Bukowski, circled around each other uneasily as they delivered their Christmas messages at the close of 1956. Gair said:

*We must keep a clear vision of the future and not let our decisions ... be clouded by immediately advantageous gains which will later turn into adverse circumstances for us as a whole.*

*It would be easy for the government to take the popular course and grant demands for improved conditions, but these could only be gained at the expense of fellow unionists who would lose their employment if undue cost burdens were placed on our already strained economy.*

*If we are to make progress as a Party ... it is vital that members of the Party should have confidence in their experienced political leaders who have upon their shoulders the serious responsibility of government, and are in the best position to know the full facts of the economic situation.*<sup>104</sup>

---

<sup>103</sup> If Gair's biographer, Frank Mines, is to be believed, the events of 1956 were only a continuation of either the bad luck or bad management that had followed Gair since his accession in 1952. Mines listed caucus members 'divided roughly according to whether they supported the views of the Premier or not.' Parliamentarians listed in the pro-Gair group included seven members who chose to support the party rather than the Premier in 1957. These members were: James Burrows (Port Curtis), Peter Byrne (Mourilyan), Felix C S Dittmer (Mt Gravatt), Cecil Jesson (Hinchinbrook), George Keyatta (Townsville), Eric Lloyd (Kedron), and Ivor Marsden (Ipswich.) Mines does not give a source for this information: more than likely, the list was done with input from Gair himself. See Mines, *Gair*, p 48.

<sup>104</sup> *Labor News* December 1956.



For Rochus Joseph John Bukowski, 1956 had been an important year because, as he declared, the trade unions had gained strength within the QCE at the expense of the political wing of the party:

*This control, executed wisely, will have a tremendous bearing upon our industrial lives, and if my conception of progress for Labor and the workers of this State is realised through a proper and sensible authority by the trade union representation on Labor's highest distinctive body, there will be many happy Christmases ahead of us all.*<sup>105</sup>

In his New Year message for 1957, Gair rejected any three weeks' leave legislation for that year. Schmella reminded PLP members of their obligation to obey convention decisions. Jack Duggan once more tried to avoid a split by bringing the adversarial parties together, proposing that the inner executive of the QCE meet with a PLP committee, together with members of the Bukowski meeting from the convention.

The possible expulsion of Gair was openly discussed in the corridors of Trades Hall, with no steadying and senior influence to counsel against it. When someone urged Egerton to show caution he replied: 'So what. We haven't got a Labor government now. They are only masqueraders and the Tories couldn't be any worse.'<sup>106</sup> Schmella expressed his hopes, in a private letter to a friend in Canada, that there would not be an open break, and that the ructions were part of the familiar Labor party pattern of intra-party disputation.<sup>107</sup>

---

<sup>105</sup> *Labor News* December 1956.

<sup>106</sup> Murphy, 'The 1957 Split', p 510. On 22 October 1959 in the ALP organ *New Age*, Egerton said ruefully: 'There is no doubt that an intelligent approach by the trade unions could have prevented handling the government of Queensland to our class enemies.' He went even further in an article in the April 1963 *Miscellaneous Worker* (official organ of the Federal Miscellaneous Worker's Union of Australia, Queensland Branch) when he said, with an effrontery that was breathtaking: 'Prior to 1957 a number of workers, dissatisfied with the failure of the now deposed Gair government to implement Labor's policy often expressed the opinion that a Tory Government could be no worse. It must be a rude awakening.'

<sup>107</sup> Schmella to John Millar, 23 January 1957. Australian Labor Party. Queensland. Papers. OM.CM/1/38. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland.

At the February meeting of the QCE, the Executive's attitude towards the refractory parliamentarians hardened. The QCE resolved that members of the PLP be reminded of their obligations and that 'in the event of this decision not being implemented, members of the PLP who do not support Convention's decisions are reminded that they will be dealt with under the Rules of the Party.' The motion was carried 51-11, showing that the QCE meant business.<sup>108</sup> In March the QCE apparently interviewed cabinet ministers closely to see where they stood. Bill Moore, minister for health and home affairs told the QCE that as a minister he had sworn an oath of allegiance to the Queen and thus was answerable to the people and not the QCE: at this juncture, Egerton swore a series of oaths of a different kind and suggested to Moore that the Queen would not pay his ministerial salary when he was sacked.<sup>109</sup>

In the poisoned political atmosphere of early 1957, almost any piece of government policy or legislation could be counted on to attract close QCE scrutiny and subsequent criticism. Bukowski certainly was operating above and beyond the call of duty in trying to disrupt the smooth functioning of government. In early 1957 he attacked one of the Labor government's sacred cows, the free hospital system, urging the implementation of a means test on patients with an income of over £2 000, the exclusion of nurses quarters from new hospitals and the establishment of a hospital insurance scheme. It was just another symptom of Bukowski being completely out of control and losing touch with the real world. Gair would recall later in the year how his old enemy had come to him about awards for forestry, main roads and other

---

<sup>108</sup> Guyatt, 'Trade Unions and the Australian Labor Party in Queensland, 1947-1957', p 252.

<sup>109</sup> Duffy, *Demons and democrats*, p 153.

workers and expect the premier to unilaterally institute changes, apparently unmindful of the existence of the Industrial Court.<sup>110</sup>

The issues of petrol and the pricing of that commodity proved another source of tension. In January 1957, oil companies, frustrated by the tardiness of the Queensland Prices Commission in dealing with their application for a petrol price increase, announced they would bring no further standard-grade petrol into Queensland. (They had applied to the Price Commissioner on 9 August 1956 for an increase of 1.5 pence a gallon.) Cabinet instructed the Commissioner to proceed to a determination: he awarded a rise of one penny a gallon, which the oil companies refused to accept, continuing the boycott instead. Gair commenced negotiations to import petrol from Taiwan (then Formosa) to break the blockade. The Brisbane press promptly christened the commodity 'Dim Sim Petrol.' The government introduced and passed a bill abolishing single-brand petrol stations. But even this blow by a Labor premier against economic monopolies towards which his party traditionally felt anathema did nothing to mollify his political enemies in his own party: both Bukowski and Egerton complained that Gair had not consulted them before introducing the bill. At first even Gair's enemies in the party seemed supportive in his battle with the oil companies, with Bukowski on 4 February publicly expressing the hope that the government would rapidly pass legislation combating the companies. But Bukowski complained on 31 March that the QCE had no knowledge of the petrol bill. On 3 April Duggan addressed the inner executive of the QCE attacking the Bill: the Executive ordered its repeal, but on 9 April a Cabinet meeting voted unanimously in favour it. Duggan was placed in a diabolical position as evidenced by his vote against the bill as a QCE

---

<sup>110</sup> *Courier-Mail* 2 June 1957.

executive member and his vote in favour of it in Cabinet six days later. He denied press reports that he had made an attack on the bill in Cabinet. <sup>111</sup>

Although he denied at the time that the oil companies had made any offers to him <sup>112</sup> years later Gair revealed how an oil company representative had arrived to see him with a suitcase containing £30 000 to encourage Gair to grant a price rise for standard petrol in Queensland. The fellow showed the suitcase to the premier's secretary, Colin Curtis, and went away, having made an appointment to see the premier the next day. Gair consulted with the Solicitor-General Bill Ryan, who was of the opinion that there would be legal problems in making any charges stick because the man with the suitcase had not offered its contents directly to Gair. By his later account, when the oil company man returned, Gair curtly told him not to sit down, as he would not be in the office long enough to need to. <sup>113</sup> Even his worst enemies could not say Gair had behaved inappropriately, but it would avail him little.

## **7.7 THREE WEEKS LEAVE : THE CLIMAX**

Parliament sat on 3 April, and if the deteriorating situation worried Gair, he did not show it. The *Telegraph* that afternoon recorded that he was 'one of the sprightliest in the Chamber' and that after prayers he had crossed the floor and sat in discussion with Opposition leader Nicklin for ten minutes. Some wag remarked that the pair might have been discussing a composite government, but if so there was nothing of the

---

<sup>111</sup> Brian Costar, 'Vincent Clair Gair: Labor's Loser', p 277, citing *Courier mail* 1 April 1957, TLC Queensland, *Minutes* 2 April 1957: A A Morrison 'Political Chronicle – Queensland', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* vol 3 no 1, 1958, pp 104-105.

<sup>112</sup> *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney) 15 April 1957.

<sup>113</sup> *Sunday Sun* 14 October 1979. In May 1957, Clyde Cameron, MHR, claimed in the House of Representatives that an oil company had paid an £800 bribe to Gair's Attorney General, Bill Power. (*Telegraph* 9 May 1957.) Unlike Brian Mullins, Gair's private secretary, Curtis was a Crown employee. He served coalition governments after Gair's electoral defeat and was Director-General of the Premier's Department from 1966 to 1970.

occasion's momentousness to be read in Gair's bearing. 'From the Premier's demeanour and that of other members [in the Chamber] one would never guess the Government was facing a political crisis.' On 5 April the three sections of the party met, but the meeting broke up without reaching agreement. On 10 April Gair outlined his reasons for opposing three weeks' leave:

*I favour three weeks annual leave when Queensland can afford it – not when the Queensland Central Executive tells me to do it. Because of lack of money, we have had to sack 2 000 men from government employ. Three weeks leave would cost at least £400 000 a year – probably £1 250 000 when its implications are fully worked out. To introduce it we would have to sack more men. I won't do it. They are like children: you are fond of them but you have to say No when they want to take an expensive clock off the wall and throw it around like a four-year-old.*<sup>114</sup>

Gair continued to hope, or at least say that he hoped for a fair hearing from the QCE, who would not destroy a Labor government. In a television interview in Sydney in mid-April he said: 'I have faith in the QCE, and I think they have a sense of justice, and a consciousness of the benefits of a Labor government in Queensland.'<sup>115</sup> But he certainly had not ruled out the prospect of expulsion. When the interviewer asked him what he would do if he was expelled, he did not seize the opportunity to deny the possibility, but said: 'If I told you that over TV, a lot of people would be as wise as I am, and I don't want them to be as wise as I am.'<sup>116</sup>

On 18 April the QCE passed a vote of no confidence in the premier by 35-27. Gair was summoned to a special QCE meeting on 24 April to show cause why he should not be expelled.

---

<sup>114</sup> *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney) 11 April 1957.

<sup>115</sup> *Courier Mail* 15 April 1957.

<sup>116</sup> *Daily Telegraph* 15 April 1957.

The no confidence motion read, in part:

*Because of [Gair's] continued and openly expressed defiance of the Convention and Queensland Central Executive ... it is obvious that the Leader of the State Parliamentary Labor Party will not accept the rules and constitution of the party whose representatives in Parliament he is appointed to lead...this Executive is of the opinion that the Leader of the State Parliamentary Labor Party has acted in such a way as to bring discredit on the party, and confusion and embarrassment within the ranks of the party itself.*

On 23 April 1957, the day before he was scheduled to appear before the QCE, Gair called a special caucus meeting that passed a vote of confidence in him by 26 to 21.

The Cabinet, in addition, signed a document declaring its 'complete confidence in the Premier' and recognizing 'the distinction with which he has led the party, and his outstanding work as head of the Executive government.' The document further claimed:

*That at no time, or on any matter, has the Premier done other than execute the decisions arrived at by Cabinet in accordance with the principle of Cabinet responsibility ...any punitive action by way of expulsion, suspension, or otherwise, taken against the Premier, will therefore be regarded as having been taken against each Minister individually.*

It was rumoured that Reg Seymour, the Parliamentary draftsman, was responsible for the wording of the document drawn up by Gair, Walsh and others. Nearly thirty years later, Jack Duggan termed it 'a, sort of, trumped-up thing' and added that Seymour was 'a nice man [but] I think on that issue, probably a bit misguided.'<sup>117</sup>

Wily down to the last detail, Gair followed the exact opposite to his usual practice with the signing of Cabinet documents and passed first to the colleague on his left, Ted Walsh, instead of the colleague on his right, Deputy Premier Jack Duggan.<sup>118</sup>

---

<sup>117</sup> Jack Duggan, Interview no 10, 12 August 1985, p 6.

<sup>118</sup> Jack Duggan, Interview no 10, 12 August 1985, p 6.

Whatever their private thoughts, all ministers signed it without demur as it went around the table, well aware that they were signing away their political lives. A few years later, when minister for agriculture and stock Harry Collins was on his deathbed, he said to Gair: 'There was only one course for any man to have taken. My end is close at hand. I will die much easier and more content than if I had taken any other course.'<sup>119</sup>

When the document came around the table to Duggan, he refused to give it an unqualified signature. According to Walsh's subsequent account, he pleaded with him to sign: 'Jack, you are the potential leader of the party in this state. You have no challenge from anybody sitting around this table, certainly not me.' Duggan still refused. Walsh became irked with him, saying: 'You can put whatever so-and-so words you like in the last paragraph. If it means what I think and what every member around this table thinks, if Gair is expelled, we are all expelled. You can put whatever words you like there.'<sup>120</sup>

In the end, Duggan did just that, the best thing that he considered politically possible. He signed the document, along with his Cabinet colleagues, but after his signature he added the vital qualification 'with the exception of the final paragraph [on punitive action], I agree.'<sup>121</sup> 'In other words', Walsh would say in a radio broadcast late in May 'in typical rodent fashion [Duggan] left a convenient bolt hole so that he could

---

<sup>119</sup> 'State General Conference QLP 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> November 1962' DLP Papers, OMR.113/80. John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland.

<sup>120</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 11 June 1957, p 45.

<sup>121</sup> The original document is still in the Gair Papers in the National Library of Australia with the annotation, 'Original – File Carefully.' Gair Papers, Box 1 Folder 6, National Library of Australia.

save his political skin.’<sup>122</sup> Speaking in Parliament on 6 September 1960, Walsh described Duggan as ‘the one man in this state who could have prevented the catastrophe, or disaster in 1957.’ Six years later, he still believed that if Duggan had ‘stuck’ there would not have been a split, and that the QCE would have backed down without the presence of a well-known minister.<sup>123</sup> As it was, the QCE was flabbergasted by the level of support for Gair, who would later write of the executive: ‘[T]hey reckoned without the responsibility of a large body of men to their oath of office, their constituents. They reckoned without allowing for the intestinal fortitude of these men to carry out those responsibilities.’<sup>124</sup>

Duggan was placed in a diabolically awkward position from the start of the conflict over the extra weeks’ leave. In public and in caucus, he had supported the premier over the issue, but at the potential cost of alienating himself from his party. After several days, he declared his support for official Labor, stating that the conflict within the party was not ‘whether you are to be penned off in a group as a supporter of Mr Gair or a supporter of Mr Duggan.’ Rather, the only principle that was involved was:

*Whether the constitutionally established and recognised authority of the Queensland Central Executive of the Australian Labor Party is to be upheld in matters and decisions flowing from its convention, which is the highest and binding authoritative body to deal with such matters, or whether Mr Gair or any other individual who gives his solemn pledge to uphold and carry out the decisions of the Labour Convention has the right to repudiate that pledge when it suits him or them to do so.*

---

<sup>122</sup> ‘Broadcast By the Deputy Premier, (Hon E J Walsh, MLA) Over Commercial Stations, 25/26 May 1957.’ Brisbane, np, [1957]. Held John Oxley Library.

<sup>123</sup> ‘10 Years of Bitterness: Background to Attack on Duggan’, *Sunday Truth* 11 September 1966.

<sup>124</sup> Gair, *Star Chamber revived!*, p 5.



Duggan's next words would follow him for the rest of his political career:

*There is only one decision to reach on the matter – whether you like it or not, whether it is wise or unwise, the course to take is to endorse the official Labor decision.*

*And that is where Duggan stands and where every true, genuine Labor man stands and continues to stand.*<sup>125</sup>

Nearly thirty years later, Duggan believed he could have beaten Gair in Caucus.<sup>126</sup>

This indicates that the anti-Gair forces underestimated the strength that the premier actually did have in Caucus: in the end, Gair commanded a majority of one over those who chose to support official Labor, and that was only because Tom Foley, former minister for lands, expelled from the party the previous year, joined with Gair's breakaway group.<sup>127</sup>

Gair would never forgive Duggan for letting him down, calling him 'a despicable Judas.'<sup>128</sup> In a radio broadcast six days after his expulsion, he reminded his listeners that Duggan was the one defector in a Cabinet of eleven 'and we know from history that a much higher association had almost his proportion.'<sup>129</sup> Eleven years later, in the Senate, Gair grandiosely reiterated the comparison. 'All [of Gair's Cabinet] were

---

<sup>125</sup> 'Deputy Premier Expected to Resign From Cabinet Today: Letter Ready for Mr Gair', *Courier-Mail* 29 April 1957.

<sup>126</sup> 'I made fairly strong speeches, even in the Caucus, in favour of Gair and that didn't help me personally, because those who were strongly opposed to Gair thought I was ...not taking a strong enough line and I think, had it come to an actual showdown with him earlier in this problem [the leave dispute], I think I could have even defeated him in Caucus actually ... I'm quite confident, had I been ambitious [enough] to test out our respective strengths, that I could have beaten him then and there, but I had no idea at that stage to – I was never what you'd call a faction person at all – never – and in addition to that, I thought I was young enough, that time was on my side, I could afford to wait.' Jack Duggan Interview, no 10, 12 August 1985.

<sup>127</sup> According to Duggan, though, Gair may have not been above shoring up at least one vote by questionable means, helping the pharmacist son of one of the parliamentarians out of a legal difficulty over drug supplies without the need for prosecution. Jack Duggan Interview no 10, 12 August 1985.

<sup>128</sup> Peter Blazey and Andrew Campbell, *The political dice men* Canberra: Outback Press, 1974, p 63.

<sup>129</sup> 'Bewitched! Bothered! Bewildered!' – press statement issued by Gair on 30 April 1957, in Gair Papers Series 5 Speeches, Articles, Broadcasts Box 6, Folder 44, National Library of Australia.

called, but one deserted the lord.’<sup>130</sup> The ‘lord’s’ enmity, in this case, would prove enduring. Nearly twenty years later, Gair said: ‘I’ve never spoken to him since and never will. He’s not in my world and since that day never has been.’<sup>131</sup>

On trial for his political life in a way that very few Australian leaders have been before or since, a severe case of flu added to Gair’s woes. He had difficulty in speaking, and, when he arrived at the meeting he found himself having to answer other charges unrelated to the leave issue. Before entering the room he had no inkling that he would be confronted with the issues of the petrol distribution legislation, the Lands Commission, the Redcliffe Royal Commission, University of Queensland staff appeal legislation and club legislation.<sup>132</sup> Gair argued that the decisions with which the executive had issue with were not his, but those of the Cabinet, of which he was the chief minister, and the caucus, of which he was an ordinary member. He denied ever deviating from the majority decision of either of those bodies, and claimed that no charge levelled against him could be attributed solely to any action of his, either as a person, or leader of the Parliamentary Labor party. Therefore, it was the Cabinet and caucus who were on trial, not he.

Though his defence on those grounds was strident and not without at least some validity, in another respect, he made no effort to save himself. Even when metaphorically at minutes to midnight he could have saved himself with an affirmative answer when asked: ‘At this late hour will the Premier give a definite undertaking to bring down a Bill granting 3 weeks’ leave as soon as Parliament meets

---

<sup>130</sup> *CPD* Senate 5 June 1968 p 1452.

<sup>131</sup> *Sunday Sun* 6 June 1976. Gair’s permanent inimicality towards Duggan can hardly be doubted, but his comment is not strictly accurate, in that it is not borne out by the parliamentary record, which features many verbal interchanges between him and Duggan in the state house between 1957 and 1960.

<sup>132</sup> Duffy, *Demons and democrats*, p 154.

in August?’ Gair did not even avail himself of an ambiguous answer to gain time but replied: ‘No, I’ll not do that as the position might be worse than it is now.’ Before the meeting, H L Edmonds, who represented the Australian Federated Union of Locomotive Enginemen (AFULE) on the QCE, had been asked to support Gair, and had agreed to do so if Gair would give a date for the necessary legislation. Gair’s refusal to do so cost him Edmonds’s vote, and, in Edmonds’s view, the votes of others as well. <sup>133</sup>

Gair told the meeting <sup>134</sup> that there had been many occasions in the past when the trade union movement and the Parliamentary party had differed in points of view, but the differences had never been allowed to cause a crisis of the magnitude of the present one, which had been fanned by relentless press publicity. He declared that members of a parliamentary party had sworn to administer in the interests of the peace and welfare of all citizens, and in moments of difficulty, when there was a choice between following party tradition and following a course that would be for the welfare of all, tradition must be laid aside for the moment.

Turning to the charges against him, he claimed that the accusations were couched in such general terms, that an adequate defence against them was almost impossible.

Gair fogged the issue somewhat at this point, saying that it was unfair to claim that he had brought discredit on the party without saying how, when or on what occasion:

---

<sup>133</sup> AFULE, Divisional Council minutes, 8 May 1957, E212/32, ANU Archives, cited in Murphy, ‘The Queensland Labor Split’, pp 512, 525. This statement from Gair negates the unlikely contention from Mines, *Gair*, p 70, repeated by Duffy, *Demons and democrats*, p 151, that Gair intended to introduce the new leave provision in the 1957-58 financial year, to take effect from 1 July 1957, less than ten weeks later.

<sup>134</sup> Except where indicated by the footnotes, most of the following account of the meeting was drawn from Lack, *Three decades of Queensland political history 1929-1960*, pp 473-476, A A Morrison, ‘Political Chronicle – Queensland’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol 3 no 1, 1958, pp 105-106.

some of the QCE charges were quite specific as to the occasions that had brought the discredit, citing the Redcliffe Commission, the Lands Commission and the clubs, university and petrol bills.<sup>135</sup> However, while the QCE mentioned the occasions, it did not elaborate on the nature of the alleged discredit.

Gair concluded his defence by pointing out with pride to the successful results in the elections of 1953 and 1956, and posing the rhetorical question – had anything occurred since the last election to indicate that the prestige or status of the party had been lowered by any action of his, his Cabinet, or the Caucus? Some, notably Denis Murphy, would later claim that Gair was not averse to wearing the crown of a martyr: the language of his concluding remarks does nothing to belie this contention:

*I cannot help recalling at this moment of supreme crisis in this Party, other occasions on which Labor men – greater Labor men than I – have stood against the clamours and demands of those who lacked their vision.*

*Can I be blamed if I recall today the tragedy of 1929 when outside this same building I saw men cheering as Labor candidate after Labor candidate fell, and his defeat was posted in figures over the awning of the **Worker** building?*

*Can I be blamed if I recall only a few weeks later, the same men appalled at the consequences of their own actions of a few short weeks earlier ... ?*

*I am glad the decision is for your making – not mine.*

---

<sup>135</sup> For a list of the charges brought against Gair, see Appendix. For further detail on the other matters mentioned, see Clem Lack, *Three decades of Queensland political history*, pp 454-470. For the controversy over the University appeals board legislation, see Margaret Jill Droughton, 'The University of Queensland Acts Amendment Act of 1957: a Case Study', Master of Public Administration Thesis, University of Queensland, 1977. For the Lands Commission episode, see R Parker, 'Public Service Neutrality: A Moral Problem: The Creighton Case', in B B Schaffer and D C Corbett, eds. *Decisions: case studies in Australian administration*. Melbourne: Cheshire in association with the Australian Regional Groups of the Royal Institute of Public Administration, 1965.

The premier could have expected no quarter. Gair recalled later: ‘Egerton put it in all its blunt crudity when he asserted during the grotesque travesty of a trial to which I was subjected: ‘The question is whether you are prepared to do what you are told.’<sup>136</sup>

Gair had answered that question. He left the room at 5.35 pm after a debate that had lasted for five hours. There was little left to be said, but Duggan spoke against the expulsion, later saying it was ‘one of my best speeches.’<sup>137</sup> Schmella moved the motion for expulsion, seconded by Ted Ashmore, of the Amalgamated Postal Workers’ Union. Bertie Milliner of the Printing Industry Employees’ Union, no friend of Gair’s but wanting desperately to snatch the chestnuts out of the fire, moved an amendment, seconded by Archie Dawson of the Electrical Trades Union, another Gair adversary, calling for a conference between the QCE and the Parliamentary party to try for a reconciliation. Milliner’s amendment was lost, 35-30. The QCE then voted with the same numbers, 35-30, to expel the premier. The meeting closed at 7.10 pm.

Fluey, and no doubt drained emotionally and very tired, Gair had already gone home rather than hang around at Parliament House. Schmella rang the parliamentary office to tell him of the decision. Brian Mullins took the call. Mullins suggested to Schmella that, as a courtesy, he call Gair at home. Apparently not relishing the task, Schmella replied: ‘Nah, you do it.’ Mullins made the call.<sup>138</sup>

Kath Gallogly, Schmella’s secretary, caught a taxi to Gair’s residence in Annerley Road, Dutton Park, and gave him the document notifying him of his expulsion. It was

---

<sup>136</sup> *Courier-Mail* 7 June 1957.

<sup>137</sup> Undated news clipping, ‘Duggan Warns Gair Men of Expulsion’, probably *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, Gair Papers, Series 12, Press Cuttings, Box 12, Folder 92, National Library of Australia.

<sup>138</sup> Duffy, *Demons and democrats*, p 155.

around midnight when she arrived. Most of the Cabinet were at Gair's home, drinking.<sup>139</sup> As well they might, for for all of them except Gair, that day marked the end of their effective political lives. Doubtless there was consolation, camaraderie and perhaps more than a little cheer in the liquor. To the irritation of Kath Gallogly, no one thought to offer her a beer.<sup>140</sup>

Numerically, it was a near-run thing, but when it came down to the process of number crunching, a scrutiny of the lists of those for and against shows that some of the delegates put their desire to maintain party unity over their distaste for Gair and his actions.<sup>141</sup> The vote to expel him was close, 35-30, but it could not be said that it was truly a reflection of the feelings that the executive as a whole had about Gair. Many of those who voted not to expel him were demonstrably against him. Duggan voted against the expulsion as did Jack Dufficy, MLA for Warrego, and T J Doyle, a Brisbane alderman, but on the QCE as a representative of the Transport Worker's Union.<sup>142</sup> Doyle and the other TWU representative, Bernie Hough, who also voted against the expulsion, were not motivated by political regard for Gair, but voted against his expulsion in the hope that party unity would be maintained.<sup>143</sup> Edgar Williams of the AWU defied Bukowski – not something to be taken lightly – and

---

<sup>139</sup> Jack Stanaway, 'The leader Labor loved and hated' [obituary of Jack Duggan], *Sunday Mail* 27 June 1993.

<sup>140</sup> Conversation, Paul Reynolds, New Farm (Brisbane) 31 March 2006.

<sup>141</sup> For example, Jack Duggan and Jack Dufficy, state parliamentarians who would remain with the 'official' Australian Labor Party, voted against expulsion, as did two delegates from the AMIEU, one from the WWF, two from the TWU and Goding from the AWU, who had moved, crucially, at the Mackay convention, that three weeks's leave be included in Gair's policy speech. Edgar Williams of the AWU also voted against the expulsion, while Bertie Milliner, who had tried for a reconciliation at the last minute, voted for Gair to be expelled. At the AWU conference in January, Goding said in his address that he would have preferred to refuse Gair endorsement rather than expelling him. See *Courier-Mail* 17 January 1958.

<sup>142</sup> For a list of for and against delegates see Murphy, 'The Split in Queensland', pp 520-521. Doyle unsuccessfully contested the seat of South Brisbane against Gair in 1957.

<sup>143</sup> John Kellett, *A fighting union: a history of the Queensland branch of the Transport Workers' Union, 1907-2000*, Brisbane: Boolarong, 2001, p 117. Doyle was a proxy for Bob Janson. The split brought about the break in a thirty year friendship between Doyle and Gair.

voted against Gair's expulsion. At some stage afterwards, Gair shook Williams's hand, and said 'I want to thank you for supporting me.' Williams replied: 'I didn't support you, I voted against the ALP being split in half.' According to Williams, Gair 'dropped my hand like a dead fish and never spoke to me from that day on, excepting to be a bit nasty.'<sup>144</sup>

## 7.8 SHOULD GAIR HAVE BEEN EXPELLED?

Did Gair's conduct warrant expulsion? The capacity of the QCE to expel a parliamentary leader could not be questioned. Under rule 32 (u) of the party constitution the QCE had the power 'to suspend or expel any member of the Party who violates its rules and its platform.' Under rule 32 (v) the QCE was empowered 'To interpret the planks of the Platform or any of these Rules or any resolutions or decisions of Convention, which may at any time be in dispute, and to expel from membership of the Party any member who refuses to abide by such interpretation and/or decision.'

On the other hand, Gair made the distinction between policy and administration in a

---

<sup>144</sup> Mark Hearn and Harry Knowles, *One big union: a history of the Australian Workers Union 1886-1994*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p 255. Despite the snub, Gair might have been a little more gracious had he known that Bukowski had tried to stop Williams from attending the meeting by refusing to pay his fare from Townsville out of AWU funds. Williams travelled to Brisbane at his own expense. (Guyatt, 'Trade Unions and the Australian Labor Party in Queensland, 1947-1957', p 255.) Williams, however, would soon change his mind. In January 1958, citing the introduction of bulk handling of sugar in Mackay that was displacing about 400 waterside workers and 120 AWU members employed in sugar rooms, Williams said that the decision to expel Gair had been the correct one. 'Whatever hesitations I may have had at the time, time has shown that the majority decision, despite its immediately apparently disastrous result was the only decision that could have been made.' *Courier-Mail* 16 January 1958.

QLP advertisement during the campaign.

*As a loyal member of the Labor Party I have always subscribed to and accepted the principle that Labor policy is determined at conventions. But no Labor leader worth his salt could accept such direction on matters of administrative detail. Such a situation would be grotesque and intolerable, and certainly irreconcilable with the principles and responsibilities of democratic government. It is the sole right and prerogative of the constitutionally elected government to determine the appropriate time for the introduction of legislation. What the QCE is doing is, in effect, attempting to invade the province of government and take over, not merely the general direction of Labor policy, but the direction of administration as well.*

Gair also claimed that:

*Never before in political history has the executive of a Federal or State Labor Party abrogated to itself the right to dictate and direct the administrative actions of a Labor government in blatant disregard of the lack of wisdom or dire economic effects that might follow.*<sup>145</sup>

A few days before the election, Gair's friend and political associate Senator Condon

Byrne put it succinctly:

*Whose parliament is it anyway? Is it the parliament of the people – or isn't it? If it is, then the people should control it; if it isn't, then why the great trouble we all go to on election day in electing members of parliament?*<sup>146</sup>

Very late in the piece, four days after the state election which saw Gair's forces

decimated, no less a voice than the *London Times* weighed in with an editorial in

support of Gair's stance:

*According to the first principles of constitutional government, as understood throughout the British Commonwealth, the QCE in its action against Mr Gair was hopelessly wrong.*

*He had his commission directly from the governor, and ultimately from the Queen, to administer in the interests of all her subjects in Queensland.*

---

<sup>145</sup> Quoted in Colin A Hughes, 'Party and Parliament in Queensland', *Parliamentary Affairs* vol 10, 1956-7, p 488.

<sup>146</sup> *Truth* (Brisbane) 28 July 1957.



*Though he may have owed his position to the support of a majority, in office he had a duty to the whole, and for the discharge of that duty was responsible to the Parliament of Queensland alone.*<sup>147</sup>

There were countless examples of policies decided by parties that remained in the platform for decades without coming close to implementation, or even discussion. As Labor historian Denis Murphy noted, from 1918 onwards there were many platform changes passed by the Convention that the Parliamentary Labor Party quietly neglected to implement if they considered them ‘too impractical, too difficult or too sensitive.’<sup>148</sup> Gair knew this too. Late in 1955 he specifically referred to the abolition of the Senate as one hitherto unimplemented part of the Labor platform.<sup>149</sup> Years after leaving the party Gair said ‘There are a lot of things on Labor’s platform that have been there since the turn of the century and have never been introduced, mainly because they believe it would be unpopular to do so.’<sup>150</sup> For example, Labor’s platform in 1915, the year it won long term government on its own for the first time, called for the ‘state manufacture, importation and sale of intoxicating liquor with the ultimate view of total prohibition.’ Not surprisingly, the party of the workers did little, if anything, towards this objective.<sup>151</sup> In January 1954, the QCE eliminated the ultimate prohibition of liquor as one of its objectives. Gair supported the move, saying that Labor objectives needed to be brought up to date, that prohibition had failed in the USA and that no future Labor government would legislate for prohibition.<sup>152</sup>

---

<sup>147</sup> *Times* (London) 7 August 1957, quoted in *Telegraph* 23 January 1958.

<sup>148</sup> D J Murphy, ‘Organisation, Structure and Finance’, in *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland 1915-1957*, p 9.

<sup>149</sup> *Courier-Mail* 24 December 1955.

<sup>150</sup> Bruce Juddery, ‘More than merely a titular head’, *Canberra Times* 22 November 1972.

<sup>151</sup> D J Murphy, ‘State Enterprises’, in *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland 1915-1957*, p 143.

<sup>152</sup> *Telegraph* 12 January 1954.

Some observers cited high authorities in defence of Gair's stance. While stressing that he would not encourage a vote for either of the Labor parties, the minister of the East Toowoomba Presbyterian Church, Reverend J A F Whyte supported Gair in the issue of outside direction, noting that 'Christ has commissioned government to execute the policy of the State. No corporation within the State has the authority to enforce or dictate public policy.'<sup>153</sup>

George Cook was thinking along the same lines as the Reverend Whyte. Cook, claiming that he had resigned from the ALP because he was a Christian,<sup>154</sup> was a State Service Union member. He would become a prominent activist for the Queensland Labor Party . He used the union journal to outline the constitutional issues involved. Cook cited section 60 of the Criminal Code, which stated that anyone who attempted 'directly or indirectly ... by threats or intimidation of any kind, to influence a member of ...Parliament in his vote, opinion, judgment or action' was guilty of a crime.

Cook then referred to the QCE letter of 21 March 1957, which he believed was a breach of the Code. The letter said:

*In the event of this decision [three weeks' leave] not being implemented, members of the Parliamentary Labor Party who do not support the Convention decision are advised that they will be dealt with by the Queensland Central Executive in accordance with the rules of the Party.*

---

<sup>153</sup> *Courier-Mail* 30 April 1957.

<sup>154</sup> *Courier-Mail* 23 May 1957.

The State Service Union disaffiliated from the Labor Party: to date (2007) it has never reaffiliated. Gair wrote to the Union congratulating the members on their decision.<sup>155</sup>

There was no direct precedent in Labor history for the situation in which Gair and the Parliamentary Labor party found themselves in the fateful autumn of 1957. Most of those concerned agreed that state parliamentarians had been subject to the control of their state organisations in the matter of conscription policy in 1917: but this was a matter of policy, not administration. Similarly, the federal executive had only a few years before instructed federal caucus to reverse its early support of the Communist Party Dissolution Bill, also a policy matter.<sup>156</sup> On many occasions during the crisis and afterward, Gair stated his support for the notion of three weeks' leave for those workers under state awards. In his policy speech on 8 July he stated: 'We will implement three week's leave for the workers when the finances and the general economy of the State are sufficiently buoyant to stand the strain. You have my solemn pledge on that.'<sup>157</sup> It was the timing of the implementation with which he had issue.

In an atmosphere less poisoned by the deeply self-indulgent mutual hatred displayed by the participants, compromise between the two sides could have taken an almost infinite number of forms. The two parties could have agreed on the economic conditions that could have predicated the introduction of three weeks' leave. Or perhaps the measure could have been introduced gradually, section by section, to the workforce: many workers already had it. Deciding which sections of the workforce

---

<sup>155</sup> *State Service* June 1957

<sup>156</sup> Colin A Hughes, 'Party and Parliament in Queensland', pp 488-489.

<sup>157</sup> 'Policy Speech of the Queensland Labor Party delivered by Hon V C Gair, MLA, Premier of Queensland at City Hall, Brisbane, 8<sup>th</sup> July 1957.' Brisbane: [QLP] [1957.]

warranted an extra weeks' leave first would have been problematical, but not as problematical as losing government.<sup>158</sup> In any case, the expulsion of Gair was, in the long term, regarded by many as overkill. Frank Waters, state secretary of the Amalgamated Postal Workers' Union at the time of the split said in 1973: 'Expelling Gair was an incorrect decision at that time. It was catastrophic.'<sup>159</sup> Egerton, who sat next to Gair at the meeting that ended with Gair's expulsion said in 1979 'looking back it was a stupid decision.'<sup>160</sup> As early as January 1958, one of Gair's opponents, Goding of the AWU, who had voted against the expulsion, said he would have preferred to refuse Gair his ALP endorsement rather than expelling him.<sup>161</sup>

It seems most likely, as Tom Hiley opined, that the expulsion was the end result of a miscalculation on the part of both sides. Bukowski and his cohorts probably believed that Gair would cave in to their demands, and Gair probably believed that, much as they hated him, they would not take the step of destroying a Labor government to get rid of him.<sup>162</sup> Both sides were wrong.

Gair did make vague allegations later on that the QCE had acted illegally against him, saying at the Fourth Australian area conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association: 'To threaten a member, penalise him, or otherwise mistreat him for failure to carry out directions is not only illegal and punishable by law, but a challenge to democracy and its democratic instrument, the Parliament itself.' In the

---

<sup>158</sup> Robert Murray, *The split: Australian Labor in the fifties*. Melbourne: Cheshire, 1970, p 321.

<sup>159</sup> *Courier-Mail* 27 November 1973. Waters was not on the QCE at the time, but the two delegates representing the APWU, E Ashmore (using proxy for E J Barr) and C L Robinson voted in favour of Gair's expulsion. Considering the stance of his union colleagues and his long term animosity towards Gair, both before and after the split, it seems extremely likely that Waters would have voted the same way in 1957.

<sup>160</sup> *National Times* 31 March 1979.

<sup>161</sup> *Courier-Mail* 17 January 1958.

<sup>162</sup> Tom Hiley interview, 1:2/23, Suzanne Walker, National Library of Australia 1974.

parliamentary debate preceding the fall of Gair's government, treasurer Ted Walsh took matters a step further by suggesting that the ALP pledge was unconstitutional. It was an interesting contention considering that Walsh, along with many of his colleagues on the Queensland Labor Party benches had taken the pledge uncomplainingly for many years.<sup>163</sup> No legal action in the matter was ever taken by Gair or anyone else, something which probably speaks for itself.

A letter from a legal academic at the Sydney University said that the QCE had launched an attack 'on the very basis of the system of responsible government and on the existence of true democracy in Queensland.' The academic hoped that the ALP politicians who deserted Gair 'will be forced by the weight of decent opinion to disappear forever from the public life of this country.'<sup>164</sup> The academic himself would not disappear from the public life of Australia until many years later, although it would be some time before most Australians heard of William Deane, who would serve as Australia's Governor-General and win almost universal respect by, in the words of Bob Gould, 'deliberately taking a humane, leftist and progressive public stance' on many issues.<sup>165</sup>

A few years later, the Labor Party in Britain decided by a two to one majority at its 1960 Conference that while Conference should determine policy, it was the

---

<sup>163</sup> Colin A Hughes, 'Party and Parliament in Queensland', p 489-490. Walsh's feelings on the significance of the pledge were more flexible than might have been expected. According to the *Sunday Truth* of 26 May 1957, Walsh said: 'I signed a pledge of loyalty before the 1956 Convention when I thought I belonged to a true Labor Party. **When any person swears a pledge, it binds him so long as the status quo is maintained.** It is ridiculous to suggest that a pledge made today, for example, should bind me at some future date, when the Labor Party might agree to affiliation with the Communist Party, or renounce allegiance to the Crown.' [Bold face is mine.]

<sup>164</sup> *Courier-Mail* 29 April 1957.

<sup>165</sup> Bob Gould, 'Race, Nationality and Religion in Australia: the Irish Catholics, the Labour Movement and the Working Class in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries', at <http://members.optushome.com.au/spainter/Catholics.html>. Accessed 26 May 2003.

prerogative of the leader of the parliamentary party to decide when policy should be carried into effect. The Queensland Labor Party organ, the *Standard*, proclaimed triumphantly that this ‘vindicated’ Gair.<sup>166</sup> Of course, it did no such thing. Britain was not Queensland, and in any case, despite it being a longstanding convention, the situation was not covered by party rules in Queensland. Gair had offended and upset so many sections of his party, that his enemies used his failure to implement party policy at a specific time as an excuse to get rid of him.

A little flexibility, a little compromising, a little negotiation, a little understanding – any, or all of these, on either side - could have made all the difference. Such a thought occurred to Jim Brett, a businessman that was a friend of both Gair and Bukowski. Brett wrote to Bukowski, and then apparently forwarded the letter, along with Bukowski’s response, to Gair. Brett urged Bukowski to try to heal the breach : ‘there is nothing in this world to prevent men coming together and sensibly tak[ing] a look at the position that has so far transpired, and [saying] to themselves – where is this getting us ...?’ Bukowski replied on 9 May that ‘Had one man done the right thing and stood down instead of ‘pooling’ his nearest associates ... there would have been no division ... Perchance ... if the man concerned were to announce that he had appointed himself Grand Duke of somewhere or other, or that he had decided to set himself up in business, matters might be healed, if the QCE was of a friendly turn of mind ...’ Brett forwarded both letters on to Gair, writing to him on 10 May ‘This bitter fight ahead – is it worth it? You will kill yourself.’

It is not known how, or if Gair replied.<sup>167</sup>

---

<sup>166</sup> ‘Gair Vindicated’, *Standard* (Brisbane), 28 October 1960.

<sup>167</sup> Jim Brett to Bukowski, 8 May 1957; Bukowski to Jim Brett, 9 May 1957; Jim Brett to Gair 10 May 1957. Gair Papers, Series 1 Correspondence Box 1, Folder 4. National Library of Australia.

## 7.9 THE WALSH FACTOR

One story which had a certain currency for a time was that Walsh had ambitions to be premier and had ‘pushed Vince to the brink’ towards this end. Jack Egerton expressed this view <sup>168</sup> on Gair’s death. While Egerton was presumably in a position to know, or believe that he knew this, the story was unknown to members of Walsh’s immediate family in the 1990s, <sup>169</sup> and there is nothing in the actions of Walsh immediately after the split to indicate anything but loyalty to his chief. Although there was a precedent in the form of Jack Duggan, for a Cabinet minister to remain faithful to the ALP rather than the premier, Walsh opted to stay loyal to Gair.

Walsh gave unwavering support to Gair at the time of the split. Tom Hiley saw him as ‘the greatest prop’ Gair had, so much so that in Hiley’s view ‘as far as the responsibility for standing firm at that time of that split in 1957, in my book Walsh is equally on the same level pedestal with Gair.’ <sup>170</sup> The official Labor party certainly viewed Walsh as a major player: a few days before the election, it was reported that Labor officials regarded him as the ‘strength behind the scenes in the QLP’ and regarded defeating him as more important than defeating Gair. <sup>171</sup> Egerton may have viewed Walsh’s support of Gair as something more sinister – an ambitious man egging on his leader towards his destruction in the hope that his own position might be improved by the fall-out. But this is not borne out by anything in the documentary

---

<sup>168</sup> *Courier-Mail* 16 November 1980. Frank Nolan of the Australian Railways Union recalled, but without elaboration ‘There was a feeling among some Labor men that Walsh was endeavouring to manoeuvre Gair out and himself in.’ Frank Nolan, *You pass this way only once: reflections of a trade union leader*. Brisbane: Colonial Press, 1974, p 134.

<sup>169</sup> Conversation with Stephen Walsh, E J Walsh’s grandson, in the early 1990s.

<sup>170</sup> Hiley Interview, 1:2/24.

<sup>171</sup> *Courier-Mail* 31 July 1957.

record, and the available evidence suggests that Walsh's loyalty to Gair came untrammelled by a hidden agenda.

In 1987, the *Courier-Mail* ran series of feature articles commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of the fall of the Gair government. Political journalist Jack Stanaway, who later worked as press secretary for Labor Deputy Premier Tom Burns, wrote that 'Edward Walsh, Transport Minister before Duggan and Treasurer since 1952, nurs[ed] a burning ambition to follow Gair as premier.' Walsh had died in February 1976, but his son, in a letter to the editor that the newspaper chose not to publish, claimed that Stanaway's statement was 'deserving of the strongest public rebuke.' According to Geoff Walsh, his father had told his family, on returning to Parliament in 1950, that he did not want to regain his position as deputy, let alone seek the top job. He had also told them after the 1956 election that he would stand down from the Cabinet at the expiry of that parliamentary term.<sup>172</sup>

The contemporary record supports the first part of Geoff Walsh's claim. Five years before, Walsh, although first believed a contender<sup>173</sup>, sat out the contest for deputy premier.<sup>174</sup> One scribe hyperbolically expressed Walsh's non-contesting as 'one of the greatest political mysteries of all time.'<sup>175</sup> Even with this, however, it is not beyond the realms of possibility that at some stage of the lead up to the crisis, the unexpected turns of events made Walsh wonder if a chance to lead Queensland could emerge from the situation, and his dormant ambitions were temporarily reignited, only to evaporate once more at some indeterminate point when he decided instead that

---

<sup>172</sup> G E Walsh to Editor, *Courier-Mail* 13 June 1987. Walsh Papers, John Oxley Library.

<sup>173</sup> *Courier-Mail* 19 January 1952; *Truth* 20 January 1952.

<sup>174</sup> *Telegraph* 23 January 1952.

<sup>175</sup> *Truth* 17 January 1954.



remaining loyal to Gair was, after all, his best option in a deeply complex situation that was changing by the day. There is, however, absolutely no documentary evidence to support this, and it seems unlikely that he would not share such thoughts with his family.

Walsh's well known penchant for fiscal prudence placed him squarely in line with Gair's thoughts on the unaffordability of the three weeks' leave. In his entry on Walsh for the *Australian dictionary of biography* Duncan Waterson noted Walsh's 'insistence on treasury's financial rectitude' and that 'his refusal to capitalise on the impasse ... demonstrated his continuing loyalty to Gair.'<sup>176</sup> He stuck with Gair for years after the conflagration of 1957, although the political alliance, and possibly the friendship of the two men, came to an end in the early 1960s.<sup>177</sup>

## **7.10 GAIR'S PERSONALITY AND OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SPLIT**

Some of Gair's actions during the Split remain a mystery. As Denis Murphy noted, his tendency to procrastinate, as he had done over the leave issue, emerged sixteen years later when he took nine months to resign from the federal leadership of the Democratic Labour Party. He may, as Murphy suggested, find some appeal in becoming a political martyr.<sup>178</sup>

---

<sup>176</sup> Duncan Waterson, 'Walsh, Edward Joseph, 1894-1976', in *Australian dictionary of biography*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002, vol 16, pp 479-480.

<sup>177</sup> Walsh's gradual disillusionment with the QLP is discussed in the next chapter. Frank Nolan claimed that the friendship between Gair and Walsh 'lapsed' in this period. See Frank Nolan, *You pass this way only once*, p 134.

<sup>178</sup> Murphy, 'The Split in Queensland', pp 513-514. Gair's procrastination and refusal to resign as DLP leader is covered in a subsequent chapter.

It may also have been that his wife, Nell Gair, was the key person in getting him to stick to his guns. In 1971 Gair recalled how he had told her that he could have easily given in on the three weeks' leave issue, but that it would cause unemployment in some areas and that it was hard to justify giving some workers an extra week's leave at the cost of dismissing others. Gair told his wife: 'I have you and the two boys to think about. I think I should point out that if I do not give in to them [the QCE] I may be out of a job.' According to her husband, Nell Gair replied: 'I am not concerned very much whether you are Premier or not. Do what you feel is right. Don't bother coming home if you feel you have done the wrong thing. Do what you believe is right and we'll get by.'<sup>179</sup> Even before his crushing 1957 defeat, Gair seems to have taken comfort in the knowledge that, at least in his own mind, he had acted correctly: 'If annihilation is my political fate, at least I will have the satisfaction of knowing, in conscience, that I did the right thing and was not a stooge or puppet for someone else.'<sup>180</sup>

His well attested loathing for the unsubtle and loutish Bukowski surely reinforced his determination to not be moved. The loathing of Gair's enemies for him also contributed – no compromises were ever offered. Frank Nolan recalled how he conferred with both Bukowski and another key player in the split, Jack Schmella. He warned both of them of the likely consequences of their actions. Schmella, however, according to Nolan 'had a faith in the Labor machine that I didn't possess', and Nolan implies that he did not believe that Gair would be backed by as many of his ministers on the leave issue as he was.

---

<sup>179</sup> Ray Johnston, 'The Vincent Clair Gair Story', *Sunday Sun* 19 September 1971.

<sup>180</sup> *Courier-Mail* 30 July 1957.

Of his conferring with Bukowski, Nolan said that Bukowski phoned him at home and ‘raised the question of possible repercussions of the split.’

Nolan continued:

*It is hard to believe that Joe would want to discuss anything with anybody. Those who don't want to believe this need not.*

*After a two hour telephone discussion I was satisfied that I had convinced Joe that any move to split the party over Gair would be an act of terrible short-sightedness and would have serious repercussions on the whole of the Labor Movement. I told Joe I thought that among the unions the Australian Workers Union would suffer the greatest hurt.*

*However he was too involved in the machinations against Gair, for whom he had a particular hatred, to pull back.<sup>181</sup>*

Nolan also recorded the allegation that Gair, seeing the writing on the wall, expressed an interest in an appointment as governor or agent-general in London. A former Labor member of Parliament ‘who was close to both Gair and his opponents’ alleged that Gair wanted a knighthood as well.<sup>182</sup> During the campaign Bukowski claimed that Gair had angled for no less than four jobs before his expulsion: Agent-General in London, Governor, chairmanship of the Sugar Board, and ‘an executive position on a Commonwealth dairymen’s organisation.’ Duggan claimed that Gair’s chief hesitancy over accepting the Governorship was the difficulty of getting a guarantee that he would get more than one term.

*It is well known that Mr Gair, intoxicated by the social environment of the Royal visit, was prepared, despite a strong revulsion of public opinion, to canvass the possibility to becoming the Governor of this state ... [his] main*

---

<sup>181</sup> Nolan, *You pass this way only once*, pp 133 – 134.

<sup>182</sup> Nolan, *You pass this way only once*, p 133. Nolan was writing in 1974 and the identity of the Labor member can only be guessed at, given that many of the pre-split Gair caucus who would answer to Nolan’s vague description were still alive at that time. There is little to suggest that Gair would have refused a knighthood at any stage of his political career.

*anxiety was his inability to secure a guarantee of a second term of office by his betrayal of the Labor Party.*

Gair denied it all, saying sneeringly of Duggan: I have known for a long time of Mr Duggan's impatient desire for me to vacate the position of premier and because of that I know he would have been prepared to offer me anything to make way for him.<sup>183</sup> Many years later, Gair would tell Denis Murphy in Dublin that the refusal of the federal executive to intervene and overrule his expulsion had been critical to the whole split. Then Federal president Joe Chamberlain, although an anti-Grouper, had, according to Schmella's secretary, Kath Gallogly, sought intervention to prevent the Queensland ALP being wrecked as had happened in Victoria in 1955. Gair's biographer, Mines, named Walsh as being particularly hopeful of intervention in Gair's favour. But of the twelve man federal executive, two, Bukowski and Schmella, had voted for Gair's expulsion, and the two Victorians and two South Australians on the executive were strongly 'anti-Grouper' with little interest in assisting Gair, especially in the view of the strong arguments made by Bukowski and Schmella against federal intervention. On 26 April the federal executive decided not to act. Gair was finished.<sup>184</sup> If Chamberlain had retained any residual sympathy for Gair his comment on Gair's defeat in August did not reflect it: 'The people of Queensland have made a notable contribution to Australian democracy.'<sup>185</sup>

---

<sup>183</sup> See *Telegraph* 11 May 1957, 1 June 1957, *Sunday Mail* 2 June 1957 for Bukowski's campaign allegations. For rumours that Gair would respectively be the Sugar Board Chairman or the governor see *Courier-Mail* 4 May 1956 and *Telegraph* 5 May 1956. In Gair's papers there is an unsigned, typewritten memorandum, dated 11 February 1957, stating diplomatically, 'Without wishing to be 'pushing' in any way, but merely from the point of view of one who is interested, there appears at present to be two heaven-sent opportunities for anyone desiring to surrender the office of Premier, namely the Cane Prices and Sugar Board (particulars of which have already been supplied) and Lieutenant Governor.' The memorandum then outlined the salary and conditions associated with the office of Lieutenant Governor. Gair Papers, Series 1 Correspondence Box 1 Folder 6, National Library of Australia.

<sup>184</sup> Mines, *Gair*, p 85: Murphy, 'The 1957 Split', p 514.

<sup>185</sup> *West Australian* 5 August 1957.

## 7.11 THE COALITION THAT NEVER WAS

The parliamentary Labor party was split evenly, with nine of Gair's ten cabinet ministers and fifteen backbenchers supporting the premier, making a total of twenty-five in the breakaway group. The number increased to twenty-six with the addition of Tom Foley, former minister for lands, who had been expelled from the ALP the previous year. Twenty-four parliamentarians remained loyal to the Labor party. Gair called a meeting on 26 April, after doing his official duties throughout the course of what must have been an extremely tense Anzac Day. The breakaway group decided to form the Queensland Labor Party and a committee of five was set the task of drawing up a constitution and rules. Gair announced on 3 May that his group would not affiliate with the DLP. On 4 May Tom Moores was chosen to replace Duggan as transport minister: on the same day all of Gair's supporters were expelled from the ALP.<sup>186</sup>

At its first meeting, the Queensland Labor Party affirmed its support of Gair by resolution, pledging to support him in governing Queensland 'in a sound constitutional and progressive manner guided by the traditional ideals which have received the endorsement of the people of Queensland over the years.' The party ideals and objectives were motherhood ones that might have been lifted from an ALP document with the exception of those that pointedly affirmed 'the upholding of constitutional government and unyielding opposition to dictation from any body or

---

<sup>186</sup> Duggan claimed that Moores remained loyal to Gair because of the promise of elevation to the ministry. 'He never indicated any undue admiration of the Premier before the crisis.' (*Courier mail* 30 July 1957.) Moores would earn the unenviable distinction of being the shortest serving state Labor minister in twentieth century Queensland.

person not elected by or responsible to the people of this State' and 'the pursuance of a vigorous campaign against the false philosophy and insidious influence of Communism or any philosophy opposed to the concept of Christian democracy.'<sup>187</sup>

Duggan, on resigning from the Gair Cabinet, took over the leadership of the rest of the PLP, which ran as the official ALP. For a brief period, Gair was speaking with Country Party leader Frank Nicklin with a view to attracting Nicklin's support to form a minority government. Gair dangled a couple of carrots in front of Nicklin's nose in the shape of an electoral redistribution and the introduction of court-controlled ballots for industrial unions.<sup>188</sup> Both parties denied that the negotiations progressed very far, but the month after Gair was expelled, ALP member for North Toowoomba Les Wood claimed that there had been 'a personal agreement' between Gair and Nicklin for a year.<sup>189</sup> Nicklin, kind, gentlemanly and easygoing, was amenable for a time, apparently unconscious of the fact that for the first time in nearly a generation his side of politics had the chance to claim the Queensland treasury benches. Ernie Evans, Country Party member for Mirani, and other hardheaded members of his party argued against the proposal with their leader.<sup>190</sup> The federal leader of the Country Party, Artie Fadden, flew to Brisbane, indicated the obvious to the guileless Nicklin and no Queensland Labor Party – Country Party coalition was formed. On 17 May Nicklin

---

<sup>187</sup> 'Queensland Labor Party, June 1957, Statement of Principles', Gair Papers Series 7 Box 7 Elections Folder 61, National Library of Australia.

<sup>188</sup> In 1983 I discovered evidence, in Nicklin's handwriting, substantiating the often denied allegations that the QLP and the Country Party considered a temporary coalition. The relevant documents are in Nicklin's papers in the John Oxley Library in Brisbane. See Brian F Stevenson, 'George Francis Reuben Nicklin: 'Honest Frank' - The Gentleman Premier', in Murphy, et al, eds, *The premiers of Queensland*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, p 288.

<sup>189</sup> *Worker* 13 May 1957. Wood was speaking at a political meeting at Toowoomba on 8 May.

<sup>190</sup> *New Age*, 4 February 1960.

closed the door on the question forever: 'No further supply will be guaranteed to the Gair government.'<sup>191</sup>

Writing nearly three years after the event, Brian Kehoe, former QLP member for Nash, saw the discussions between Gair and Nicklin in a different light. Kehoe admitted that Nicklin and Alf Muller, Country Party member for Fassifern, had visited Gair 'on their own initiative', agreed with his stand against the QCE, and 'declared the Country Party would not embarrass a Queensland Labor Party government.' Kehoe took that to mean that supply would not be opposed, and noted 'This is vastly different from suggestions of a coalition.' Nicklin had later reneged on the declaration.<sup>192</sup> Gair recalled the meeting in similar phrases, saying that Nicklin and Muller 'gave an unsolicited undertaking not to embarrass my government until we were ready to go to the people. There was never the slightest suggestion of a coalition between the two parties.'<sup>193</sup>

Even after these events, however, the idea of an alliance between the coalition and the QLP was floated on at least one occasion. On 19 June at Rockhampton, Nicklin said that the Country-Liberal parties would consider a coalition if they did not win enough seats to govern on their own. Gair, however, said in Cairns that he was not keen on a coalition with the conservative parties and optimistically foresaw that the QLP would govern on their own.<sup>194</sup> In the *Courier-Mail* of 21 June 1957, Gair was quoted as saying that he had never suggested a coalition but that it might be possible for a party without an absolute majority to work with the support of some other group. Up to the

---

<sup>191</sup> *Courier-Mail* 18 May 1957.

<sup>192</sup> Brian Kehoe, 'Duggan's TV Fairy Tales', *Standard* 17 February 1960.

<sup>193</sup> *Courier-Mail* 9 February 1960.

<sup>194</sup> *Worker* 24 July 1957.

time of the split at least, Gair had always been rather politically cautious, but this time his caution was unnecessary.

### **7.12 A MEMORABLE PARLIAMENTARY SESSION**

When Parliament reconvened on 11 June, it was the first parliamentary session since 4 April. Nicklin and his political allies the Liberals were treated to the sight of the once impregnable PLP tearing itself apart. Some of the time at the historic session was taken up deciding who was the leader of the Opposition. Duggan affirmed, correctly, that he now led the party with the greatest numerical strength in the house that was not the government, and the Speaker, J H 'Johnno' Mann confirmed this, but left the matter for the house to decide. Nicklin stressed the unity of the Liberal-Country Party Opposition, which had been recognised as the Opposition in August 1956 as a coalition. Duggan reminded members that the Liberals and the Country party had separate party organisations, but Gair was more supportive. 'As far as I am concerned, in conscience I have to say that I have always recognised the Liberal Party and the Country Party as being the Opposition to the government.'<sup>195</sup> The question was put to the vote. Confirming their disdain for their erstwhile colleagues, Gair and his supporters voted alongside Nicklin, confirming him in the position.

That question settled, Gair moved the suspension of the Standing Orders to allow for the passage of the supply bill in a single day. Duggan opposed the motion, but Nicklin agreed to the suspension, claiming that the government had the right to state its case. Walsh then introduced the motion for supply, speaking for 119 minutes, four and a half of which were devoted to supply and the rest to the political situation.

---

<sup>195</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 11 June 1957, p 12.



For that day, and the next, Queensland was treated to an unedifying struggle that chiefly raged between the two opposing Labor factions. The conservative parties, doubtless unable to believe their luck, were fascinated spectators to the collapse of the Labor government that had ruled Queensland for all but three years in the living memories of most Queenslanders. Dr Felix Dittmer, newly elected deputy ALP leader called the debates ‘the most outstanding volcanic belching of venom and hate that this House has ever heard.’<sup>196</sup>

Red herrings abounded during those two days, and protagonists excavated much deeper than usual in their quest for the political dirt that was thrown. In such an environment it is not surprising that deep significance was attached to the most innocuous of occurrences. Gair saw Dittmer having a drink with Arch Fletcher, Nicklin’s secretary.<sup>197</sup> Duggan taunted Gair for allegedly asking his wife to get up on a public platform in Toowoomba ‘to make a plaintive appeal to save his political hide.’ Gair, furious, later replied ‘If she was selected to speak at that meeting and scheduled to speak at it, all the hecklers in the world including Mr Duggan and his team would not have stopped her because she has more fortitude and more courage than they have.’<sup>198</sup> Walsh produced a fifteen year old letter from a federal minister to Clarrie Fallon saying that Bukowski had once been a member of the Mackay branch of the Communist Party. The letter claimed that Bukowski, who was alleged to have been of German-Polish descent, had only narrowly escaped wartime internment after

---

<sup>196</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 11 June 1957, p 74.

<sup>197</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 11 June 1957, p 74.

<sup>198</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 11 June 1957, p 31.

Fallon interceded with Evatt on his behalf.<sup>199</sup> Obviously on a roll, he also produced a sworn declaration surrounding the curious circumstance that Tom Hiley, deputy leader of the Liberal party, had arranged for the delivery of a washing machine to the Bukowski residence and had the item charged to himself. Hiley admitted the ‘charge’, but claimed that Bukowski had subsequently paid for it.<sup>200</sup> Later, on the subject of the washing machines that his firm had sold, Hiley said that ‘If by some miracle they could marshal the lot of them in simultaneous operation they could not cope with the dirty linen which the Treasurer presented to this Chamber yesterday.’<sup>201</sup>

Gair knew that the game was up and that Supply would be denied to him. He appeared resigned, and using once more a phrase that he had used the night of his expulsion: ‘If the Opposition wants to accept the responsibility for refusing Supply – the responsibility for placing the government in the position of not being able to pay their employees, well, that is their business; it is a matter for their decision. I am glad that it is their decision and not mine.’<sup>202</sup>

When the time came for Supply, Duggan and his men crossed the floor to be counted along with Nicklin and the other coalition members to deny it to what was left of the Gair government. Country Party backbencher Joh Bjelke-Petersen remembered watching Duggan speak that fateful day: ‘Maybe because of the heat or maybe

---

<sup>199</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 11 June 1957, p 41. Interestingly, there was documentary evidence of the claim that Bukowski was a member of the Communist Party. Walsh read the letter, dated 4 May 1942, from the Federal minister for supply and development, Jack Beasley, to Fallon, into parliamentary record. Beasley noted that ‘no evidence was obtained that he [Bukowski] was an active worker in that body.’

<sup>200</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 11 June 1957, p 42.

<sup>201</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 11 June 1957, p 66.

<sup>202</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 11 June 1957, p 59.

because of the pressure that was on him, he was perspiring freely, and the perspiration ran down his face and dripped from the end of his chin.’<sup>203</sup>

For Frank Nicklin, it was the most important moment of his political life, and he could not believe his own luck. ‘Mr Duggan did exactly what I wanted him to do’, Nicklin said later. ‘In fact, I didn’t think he’d be foolish enough to do it.’<sup>204</sup> Even at this late stage, matters could have played out differently. Had the official Labor party abstained from voting, the coalition plus the one independent in the House at the time of the vote, Tom Aikens (Mundingburra), would not have had the numbers to deny Supply. But under Duggan’s leadership the ALP crossed the floor and voted with the Opposition. Curiously, Duggan was jubilant, calling out to his former colleagues: ‘Very unhappy men, aren’t you? All the machinations failed.’ For his part, Gair demonstrated a nonchalance that can only have been feigned, yawning twice while the vote was taken shortly after 10.30 pm. At 10.37 pm, Jim Clark (Fitzroy), chairman of committees, announced the defeat of the government.<sup>205</sup> From his unaccustomed seat behind the ranks of his adversaries, Labor’s Cecil ‘Nugget’ Jesson waved a handkerchief in grim, symbolic farewell to what was left of the Gair government.<sup>206</sup>

Gair’s Attorney General Bill Power later called 12 June 1957 ‘the saddest day in my life.’ He sat there miserably as the vote was taken, eerily replaying in his mind the words of Forgan Smith ‘in his rich Scots brogue: “ The Labor Party need have no

---

<sup>203</sup> Joh Bjelke-Petersen, *Don’t you worry about that!*, p 64.

<sup>204</sup> Nicklin Interview National Library of Australia, 1:1/33.

<sup>205</sup> *Courier-Mail* 13 June 1957.

<sup>206</sup> Jesson is shown waving his handkerchief in Lack, *Three decades of Queensland political history 1929-1960*, plate 82.

fears of being defeated by the electors. The only way in which it will be defeated will be from within.”<sup>207</sup>

### 7.13 ELECTORAL OBLIVION

In public, Gair at first had high hopes for the 1957 election, fractured as his party was. But a position paper, kept under wraps at the time, predicted that the QLP would only get fifteen seats, finishing a poor third to the Country Party and the Liberals, who, it was forecast, would get twenty-six each, well in excess of that needed to form a government.<sup>208</sup> Even so, it has been hypothesised that had Gair gone to the polls quickly after his expulsion on 24 April rather than wait for an updated set of the electoral rolls to be produced, he would have done a lot better than what he did. Bill Power, Attorney General in the Gair government said a few years later:

*If we'd had an election at once, those of us who'd stuck by our principles would have swept home. After that the breach could have been healed. [But] By the time the election came around a lot of people were so confused they didn't know what the principles were any longer ...*<sup>209</sup>

Nicklin and the Liberal leader Ken Morris claimed that the rolls could be ready by the end of May,<sup>210</sup> but in Parliament on 11 June, Ted Walsh was unambiguous. In answer to an interjection from Tom Aikens, the North Queensland Labor Party member for Mundingburra, Walsh said:

*If the hon member for Mundingburra can tell me how to run an election without rolls I will be happy to hear him. Nobody in this House would be happier to go to the country right now while this side of the House, the*

---

<sup>207</sup> Bill Power, 'For Labor – Unity at All Costs!', *Sunday Truth* 23 April 1961.

<sup>208</sup> Untitled paper, Gair Papers Series 7 Elections Box 7 Folder 60, National Library of Australia.

<sup>209</sup> Bill Power, 'For Labor – Unity at All Costs!', *Sunday Truth* 23 April 1961.

<sup>210</sup> On 8 May 1957 the *Courier-Mail* reported Nicklin and Morris as saying that the rolls could be ready in two or three weeks.

*Queensland Labour Party, is on the top of the wave, than the Queensland Labour Party itself.*<sup>211</sup>

In the earliest stages of the intra-party struggle, Gair had enjoyed the unaccustomed enthusiastic support of the conservative press. As early as August 1955, it was the *Sunday Truth's* 'considered opinion that the Labor government of Vince Gair tallie[d] favourably with those led by "giants of the past".'<sup>212</sup> But the press turned against him very quickly when it was realised that Frank Nicklin, Opposition leader for sixteen years and the genial, smiling loser of six elections, most of them annihilations, at last had a chance.<sup>213</sup> As Gair's own campaign periodical, *South Brisbane Opinion* commented: 'There, for a little while, when caught in a temporary fever of patriotic fervour and moral right, the anti-Labor press and politicians spoke the truth.'<sup>214</sup>

The benevolent treatment of Gair from the mainstream press was not to last. 'If Mr Gair's legislation had always been marked by wisdom and regard for the best interests of the community', said the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 3 May, 'things might have been different. Unhappily it has not. A good deal of it has been sectional, spiteful,

---

<sup>211</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 11 June 1957, p 26. According to Archie Dawson, ETU President, Mick Brosnan (Fortitude Valley), a Gair supporter, was confident of a QLP victory and told Dawson that he, Brosnan, would be a good minister or speaker. Archie Dawson, *Points and politics: a history of the Electrical Trades Union of Queensland*, Brisbane: Colonial Press, 1977, p 241. A writer in the *Sunday Mail* of 19 May 1957 predicted after 'a survey of electoral experience in Queensland' carried out by 'researchers' that Gair's team would win twenty seats compared to the official ALP's thirteen, but acknowledged that the supremacy of the Gair group over the official ALP was a 'surprise disclosure in the survey.'

<sup>212</sup> 'Hands Off the Gair Govt! A Warning to Potential Wreckers of Labor Party', *Sunday Truth* 21 August 1955. This article was reprinted on its own for redistribution: a copy is in the Gair Papers, National Library of Australia.

<sup>213</sup> For treatment of Frank Nicklin's career, see the following: Brian F Stevenson, 'The Political Career of Sir Francis Nicklin, 1932 – 1968.' Bachelor of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1983. : Brian F Stevenson, 'George Francis Reuben Nicklin: 'Honest Frank': The Gentleman Premier', in D J Murphy, Roger Joyce, Margaret Cribb and Rae Wear, eds. *The premiers of Queensland*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 2003: Brian Stevenson, 'Frank Nicklin and the Coalition Government, 1957-1968', *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol 13, no 11, August 1989: Brian F Stevenson, 'Nicklin, George Francis Reuben, 1895-1978' *Australian dictionary of biography*, vol 15, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000.

<sup>214</sup> *South Brisbane Opinion*, 2 August 1957. The copy examined is in the Gair Papers, National Library of Australia.

almost petty. That is why not too many tears will be shed for him in his present plight.’ More predictably, the *Advocate*, organ of the Australian Railways Union, in its edition of 15 May, had little time for Gair as a feted hero. ‘He is being hailed as a strong man but he is only a weakling who has succumbed to his own silly vanity and the adulation of Labor’s enemies.’ The perception of Gair as a political martyr would be restricted to the *South Brisbane Opinion*, the 2 August 1957 issue of which described Gair as one:

*who stood four-square to the winds of anarchy and the assaults of furtive, sly, hidden Communism ... His enemies, including some of the bitterest and most vitriolic press critics in the Commonwealth, recognised that here, as history was in the making, a great and heroic figure had arisen to inspire the community, to take up the cause of the people, to face political martyrdom and butchery of the most Moscow-like brand, without fear or flinching.*

Gair fought a hyperbolic campaign based, characteristically, on the purported threat of Communism. The fiery, cold warrior came to the fore. It meant little that Bukowski and Duggan had been avowed opponents of Communism for years. It meant little that Communists were explicitly excluded from ALP membership. It meant little that the Communists had attracted precisely one fifth of one percent of the vote at the 1956 state election, down from two-thirds of one percent of the vote at the election of 1953. It meant little that no other Australian political party had expended as much in terms of funds and efforts in propaganda against Communism. It meant little that during the campaign, when federal member for Moreton Jim Killen accused Duggan of being a Communist, fiery member for Adelaide Clyde Cameron shouted at him: ‘How dare you accuse John Duggan of being a Communist? No one has been a greater opponent of Communism than John Duggan!’<sup>215</sup> Federal Labor member Brendan Hansen had no doubt later on that Gair’s so called opposition to Communism was feigned, at least

---

<sup>215</sup> *Courier-Mail* 9 May 1957.

in part. He told an interviewer: 'For years Labor people have been saying that this is a lot of rot about Communism, Vince Gair amongst them. But all of a sudden he found that the people who were against him were mates of the Communists, or there were Reds under the bed. It was all part of a plot and there would be blood running down the streets and everything else.'<sup>216</sup>

For the first time since 1926, the Communists did not run candidates under their own banner, a sound enough decision for a fading party. But Gair saw sinister connotations even in their non-appearance: 'the Communist candidates are conspicuously absent in this most vital election campaign, and the whole weight of Communist support is being thrown behind ALP candidates.'<sup>217</sup> Once more his blinkered outlook came into play and, intentionally or unintentionally, he overlooked the obvious – that the cooperation of the Communists with a mainstream party would be more likely to dilute Communist influence rather than enhance it. Gair would not know it for many years, if ever, but Claude Jones, leader of the Communist Party in Queensland advised Fred Whitby, a member of the QCE, against expelling him.<sup>218</sup> In the October 1957

---

<sup>216</sup> Brendan Percival Hansen, [Interview]. ORAL TRC 4900/82. National Library of Australia, p 3:7. Hansen was the member for Wide Bay from 9 December 1961 to 18 May 1974.

<sup>217</sup> *Courier-Mail* 21 June 1957.

<sup>218</sup> Costar, Brian. '“For the Love of Christ, Mick, Don't Hit Him”': The Split in Queensland', in Brian Costar, Peter Love and Paul Strangio, eds. *The great Labor schism: a retrospective* Melbourne: Scribe, 2005. Whitby was later secretary of the Queensland Trades and Labour Council, but in 1957 he represented Small Unions on the QCE. He ignored Jones's advice and voted to expel Gair.

In a radio address during the split, Paul Hilton, a minister in the Gair government, said explicitly (and in block capitals, in the transcript): 'The Communist Party framed the plot for the attempted overthrow of your government, and made use of Bukowski and other dupes to bring the attempt about.' See Hilton, Paul. *“The shadow of a dictator” broadcast by the Minister of Public Lands ... on June 9-10 '57* [Brisbane: Queensland Labor Party, 1957]. This item is held at the National Library of Australia.

The Queensland Labor Party later claimed a Communist hand in the three weeks' leave issue and the subsequent expulsion of Gair, quoting at length from a speech delivered by Dixon, President of the Communist Party of Australia in March 1957. Dixon claimed that the three weeks' leave issue was introduced at the Mackay conference 'under our influence' adding that 'the Bukowski faction put this motion and voted for it in order to make the position of the reactionary Parliamentary Labor Party caucus as difficult as possible.' However, Jack Devereux of the Amalgamated Engineering Union was unlikely to have introduced the issue under Communist influence. A political moderate, he had been

issue of the *Communist Review* Jones said that the Communist leadership in Queensland felt ‘open misgivings ... of the wisdom and timeliness of the tactics of the main ALP leaders in the struggle against Gair.’ The Communists would much have preferred that the anti-Gair forces take over the QCE and then gradually destroy the strength of the Gair faction by disendorsing its members one by one. Instead, the expulsion of almost the whole Cabinet provided Gair’s followers, at least for a time, with a strong sympathy vote.<sup>219</sup>

The ALP itself did not exactly welcome Communist assistance with open arms. One piece of ALP propaganda, authorised by Bukowski, used the ‘second-guessing’ process in a remarkable manner when it claimed the Communists were making a token show of backing the ALP in order to secure the return of a Tory government which would ‘create the conditions of conflict in Queensland they deem favourable for exploitation by Communist agitators.’<sup>220</sup>

Bukowski challenged Gair to name the Communist members of the QCE but Gair declined the opportunity ‘to allow myself to be caught in any such trap for young players’, on the grounds that if the British government was not able to pinpoint Burgess and MacLean as traitors, then he would scarcely be likely to succeed in pinpointing Communists on the QCE. As Gair had known and worked with many of

---

demonstrably interested in the question well before the Mackay convention. Moreover, the motion was supported by a wide ideological range of convention delegates. The Communist claim of clandestine influence is nonsense, and it is more than likely that many in the Queensland Labor Party knew it to be so. The speech is reproduced under the heading ‘Dixon’s Instructions to the Communists’, *Standard* vol 1 no 22, Special Issue, no date, but probably around August 1959. (It refers to the Liberal-Country Party coalition victory of 3 August 1957 as ‘two years ago’ and reminds subscribers to renew their subscriptions by 17 September.)

<sup>219</sup> Jones, Claude. ‘The Queensland Elections’, *Communist Review* October 1957: ‘Mugga’, ‘The Lesson of Queensland’, *Observer* 11 June 1960.

<sup>220</sup> ‘Sensational Exposure: the Truth about Grouper Walsh’s ‘Zinovieff Letter’, Brisbane: ALP, 1957. Copy held by the Fryer Library, University of Queensland.



the QCE members for decades, and was challenged to pick from a couple of dozen individuals, not a whole nation, the analogy was flawed, just as his other insightful contention that would foreshadow the use of avian imagery of a later premier: ‘You don’t find pigeons and scavenger crows consorting together!’ Remarkably – or not so remarkably – Gair did not cite the legal need for prudence in making such accusations.<sup>221</sup>

As a foe of Communism, Gair took himself very seriously indeed. ‘I am pledged to destroy every Communist and as long as I have breath in my body I will continue to destroy them to keep this country a democracy.’<sup>222</sup> He saw himself playing the lead in a political drama that would have repercussions far beyond the borders of Queensland, and far beyond the confines of a normal state election: ‘I have said this will be the most vital vote in Australia’s history because I believe it! I have warned that the poll may decide whether democratic government will stand or fall.’ Gair drew the political longbow to make comparisons that seem risible today:

*We have learned from the sad experiences of some overseas countries that the first step in the establishment of a dictatorship is to capture the Parliament. It happened in Czechoslovakia. It could happen here.*<sup>223</sup>

In the 2 August 1957 issue of the *South Brisbane Opinion*, produced for circulation within his own bailiwick, Gair demonstrated a large degree of self-satisfaction over the stand that he had taken:

---

<sup>221</sup> *Courier-Mail* 7 June 1957. The later Premier referred to, of course, was Joh Bjelke-Petersen who famously said of a critic, a former Miss Queensland and Miss Australia, Mrs Helen Bonner (formerly Newton), ‘If you fly with the crows, squawk like a crow and look like a crow, you can’t yell out if you get shot at.’ See Hugh Lunn, *Johannes Bjelke-Petersen: a political biography*, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1984, pp 269-270.

<sup>222</sup> *Courier-Mail* 23 July 1957.

<sup>223</sup> *Courier-Mail* 31 May 1957.

*Never in that long period [as the member for South Brisbane] have I felt a sterner or graver duty to the electors than that which has now devolved upon me, of upholding constitutional government in the face of tremendous pressure from a group of men who expect[ed] me to abandon it. Never have I felt a greater pride in the discharge of my duty, than in resisting such pressure.* <sup>224</sup>

Even Nell Gair saw comparisons with Soviet takeovers in Eastern Europe, telling an audience in Toowoomba that young boys had died in the streets of Hungary trying to win back the freedom relinquished by their parents: ‘We don’t want that to happen to our children.’ <sup>225</sup> Her husband, also concerned for Queensland children, painted a grim, but luridly imaginative, Cold War-inspired picture of Queensland and Australia after a Duggan-led Communist victory:

*Let them succeed in this in Queensland and before you know where you are, you will have the Godless all-powerful State.*

*Your children will be writing paeans of praise to jackhammers, and workers will be sweating their insides out to earn leather medals for the greatest production output.* <sup>226</sup>

In the watershed 1957 election, which heralded the start of thirty-two years of conservative rule in Queensland, the bitterness of the campaign was almost exclusively centred on the two Labor parties. Remarkably, the victorious Liberal and Country parties lost ground even by comparison with their lackluster vote in 1956. They recorded swings against them of one to two percent in most electorates, with larger swings of up to 5.7 percent recorded in Brisbane seats. The reason for this can only be conjectured, but the most likely possibility is that the political courage (and, perhaps, experience) of Gair and his followers attracted some of the less solid

---

<sup>224</sup> A copy of this publication is in the Gair Papers in the National Library of Australia.

<sup>225</sup> *Courier mail* 8 June 1957.

<sup>226</sup> *Courier mail* 18 May 1957.

conservative vote, particularly among the Liberals. It was to no avail. The roughly equal split in the Labor vote (28.89 for the ALP, 23.39 percent for the Gair led Queensland Labor Party) in the days of first past the post voting gave both conservative parties remarkable successes against the warring Labor parties.

Both Labor parties had started out at an overwhelming disadvantage, inherent with the first past the post voting system.<sup>227</sup> According to the calculations of one scribe, twenty-nine Labor members of both sorts had to poll better than two to one against the other Labor candidate to have any chance of being returned: of these, sixteen had to poll three to one or better. The position of the ALP member for Roma, Alf Dohring, was unenviable: he could not afford to lose more than one in 200 of his last election supporters, unless he won some votes that had previously gone to his Country Party opponents. By contrast, the Liberal and Country Parties could afford to approach the election with confidence: it was predicted, accurately, that none of the twenty-four seats held by members of those parties would be lost.<sup>228</sup>

The Country Party won two seats from the ALP and six from the QLP. The Liberals won four from the ALP and six from the QLP. Two QLP seats fell to the ALP. Subsequent boundary changes have made very detailed comments on the long term effects meaningless, but some of the changes were either illustrative of a high-water mark, or became extremely well entrenched. The Liberals won Sandgate in 1957 but lost it in 1960 – at the time of writing (2007) it is still in Labor hands. Other gains

---

<sup>227</sup> See, however, the claim by Simon Jackman that if preferential voting had been in place, the official Labor party would have done worse, the Queensland Labor Party would have done better and the coalition would have polled well enough to form a government. He postulated that Labor could have formed a government if the QLP and ALP had swapped preferences at the rate of 50% or higher in one direction and 80% or higher in the other. Simon Jackman, 'Split Parties Finish Last: Preferences, Pluralities and the 1957 Queensland Election', *Australian journal of political science*, vol 27, 1992.

<sup>228</sup> *Courier mail* 7 June 1957.

became part of the Queensland political landscape for a generation or more. Liberal members represented Ashgrove, Windsor and Kurilpa until 1983, Nundah until 1989 and Merthyr (Clayfield from 1992) until 2001 (although they won it back in 2006.) The gains of their sometime coalition partner proved even more enduring. The Country, later National Party, took Flinders from former Labor Prime Minister Frank Forde, and retained it until 2001, winning it back in 2004. Labor never again held Gregory; nor did they ever win back Balonne, Roma or Somerset, or the electorates that in time replaced them.

The Duggan-led Labor party recorded its worst result in terms both of votes and seats since 1907. (In terms of seats, the party would do even worse in 1974 when its Legislative Assembly numbers were reduced to eleven.) In many cases, the party had to quickly find candidates to replace those that they had endorsed in 1956 but had defected to Gair. In all cases, the cause was hopeless, with little more than token, ‘good soldier’ candidates, drafted at short notice to fill the breach. Even Jack Egerton was hurriedly pressed into service as a candidate in a bid to take the inner Brisbane seat of Fortitude Valley from Gair supporter and self-styled ministerial hopeful Mick Brosnan. (Liberal Bob Windsor beat both.) No incumbent Country or Liberal member lost, and no newly endorsed QLP candidate was successful, although two newly endorsed official Labor party candidates were able to dislodge sitting QLP members in Keppel and Bulimba. But Labor had suffered a very serious casualty in the electorate of Toowoomba – Duggan himself.<sup>229</sup>

---

<sup>229</sup> However, he returned to Parliament, albeit by a circuitous route, within the year. The Queensland Labor Party candidate for Gregory, Minister for Mines George Devries died on 13 July 1957, so a by-election for Gregory was held a few weeks later after the general election, with Duggan as the official Labor candidate. He was once more unsuccessful. But on 29 March 1958 Les Wood, Opposition leader and member for North Toowoomba, died suddenly. Duggan won the subsequent by-election and returned to both Parliament and his position as Leader of the Opposition.

If the results for 'official' Labor were dire, the results for the Gair-led Labor party were even worse. On paper, the Queensland Labor Party had an encouraging start. The money raised by Gair as premier to fight elections, £5 000, went to the Queensland Labor Party. Across the state ALP branches split into two, with at least two branches (Greenslopes, in Brisbane's southern suburbs, and Stanthorpe) deciding unanimously to dissolve and form a QLP branch instead. In West End, just south of the Brisbane River in the Kurilpa electorate, party members formed branches of the QLP and ALP under the common roof of the Kurilpa Municipal Library Hall. The alderman for Kurilpa, Col Bennett, and the state member for Kurilpa and new Minister for Transport Tom Moores walked together into the hall, separating to go into different meeting rooms.<sup>230</sup>

A number of ALP branches announced that they would affiliate with the QLP, and by election day the infant party had established or acquired 150 branches, and was able to field sixty-two candidates<sup>231</sup>, covering all seats in which they had even a glimmer of hope – and, perhaps, appreciably less than that. Party spokespeople claimed that they were 'embarrassed' by the number of nominations that they had received. They

---

<sup>230</sup> *Courier mail* 28 May 1957.

<sup>231</sup> Frank Mines, *Gair*, p 85. It will probably never be known how long before the split work had commenced on the organisation of branches of a breakaway Labor party. I found nothing in the Gair papers in the National Library, or the Democratic Labor Party papers in the John Oxley Library in Brisbane that was illuminating on the point. In the *Courier-Mail* of 23 October 1956 Bukowski claimed to have knowledge of a meeting of 'a potential Anti- Communist Labor Party in Queensland.' In July 1957 Duggan said of the remarkably quick establishment of the QLP: 'He [Gair] had an election organisation, complete with funds, functioning within six days of his expulsion. The ablest man in Australia could not have done that in six days. This thing has been developing slowly and insidiously for some time.' *Courier-Mail* 30 July 1957. An internal ALP report after the election stated: 'the Queensland Labor Party was obviously well organised considering the short time available, and there can be no doubt that organizational plans had been made a long time before the split in the party.' ([Australian Labor Party.] 'Report on Election Campaign: 1957', Denis Murphy Papers, UQFL129, Fryer Library, University of Queensland.) In the *Telegraph* of 26 August 1962 Frank Waters was quoted as saying: 'It is well known that at the Mackay convention ... plans had already been made for the formation of the QLP.'

also had their share of what in a later age would be called ‘glamour’ candidates: Dan Casey, celebrated criminal lawyer stood in Brisbane and Clive Uhr, well known medical specialist and chairman of the Brisbane Amateur Turf Club in Kedron. Two former Labor contenders for Brisbane Lord Mayor threw their hats into the ring once more. C A Edwards, Labor’s candidate for Lord Mayor in 1943 and 1946 and president of the Queensland Lawn Tennis Association stood in Mt Gravatt, and the most recent (1955) Labor mayoral candidate, Mick Lyons, stood in Buranda.<sup>232</sup> It is not known how many of these men expected to be elected to Parliament: Dan Casey claimed that he was not contesting the election as an opportunist, but ‘on a question of principle and to set an example.’<sup>233</sup> Casey added later: ‘I am with Vince Gair because he is cleaning [cleansing?] the Labor party, not destroying it.’<sup>234</sup>

But election day was a disaster for the new breakaway party. With first past the post voting, the overwhelming majority of QLP candidates finished second best, or worse, to the major parties, or entrenched Independents. Only eleven QLP candidates were successful, and none of the victors were among the newly endorsed. Perhaps the only silver lining – and it was a very faint one that in time would prove irrelevant – was that many of the survivors were former ministers and prominent Gair supporters, giving the small group the advantage, at least, of administrative experience. Walsh was emphatically returned in Bundaberg, and former Attorney General Bill Power in the inner metropolitan seat of Baroona. Local hero Gair was returned in South Brisbane.

---

<sup>232</sup> *Courier-Mail* 11 June 1957.

<sup>233</sup> *Courier-Mail* 11 July 1957

<sup>234</sup> *Courier-Mail* 17 July 1957.

Depending on how it was perceived, Vincent Clair Gair had demonstrated either – or perhaps, both – remarkable political courage, or an extreme degree of stubbornness. Either way, he had paid a terrible price.

#### **7.14 THE AFTERMATH**

Neither Jack Schmella or Joe Bukowski long survived these tumultuous events. Schmella died in 1960 after a long illness: he was only fifty-one.

Bukowski's decline was protracted and tragic. A few days after the election, the tiny Torbanlea branch of the ALP called for his expulsion, on the grounds of his discourtesy towards Evatt during the campaign, and his propensity for issuing statements unauthorised by the QCE. In a move which probably did little to lower Bukowski's levels of hypertension, the loyal party workers of Torbanlea magnanimously acknowledged his fight against Communism, especially as leader of the Industrial Groups, apparently not realising that since he had cast aside his grouper role in January 1955, Bukowski had been hoping it would disappear from public memory.

While it was relatively easy for Bukowski to shrug aside the criticism of the Torbanlea ALP, others within the party were more powerful and even more willing to act on his shortcomings. Bukowski was suspended as QCE President after an incident at a December 1958 Christmas party in which he was accused of insulting behaviour towards a woman, future Labor alderman Jean Howie: there was some talk that the

incident was a set up.<sup>235</sup> The Oxley branch of the Labor party refused to renew his membership. He was found dead on the bathroom floor of his residence in Portland St, Annerley early in the morning of 19 January 1960. He probably died within five hundred metres of his hated foe, who lived around the corner at 329 Annerley Road. No comment from Gair seems to have been recorded, but Premier Frank Nicklin paid tribute to Bukowski as someone who had worked very hard on behalf of the worker.<sup>236</sup> Gair's former Attorney General, Bill Power, a friend of Bukowski's before the split, made up his differences with him after the debacle of 1957, and came in for some criticism when he attended his funeral. In 1961 Power said, darkly, mysteriously, and unfortunately without elaboration: 'I'll say this. Joe Bukowski was honest. He didn't take any of the blood money that was being offered around at that time to help bring our government down.'<sup>237</sup>

Jack Egerton, the ruthless, unsubtle and thorough organiser continued to lead the Trades and Labour Council throughout the 1960s. To an extent, the history of the state Labor party in Queensland in the decade after the split is the history of Jack Egerton's cementing of his influence and his neutralisation of potential rivals. Before the split he had asserted intemperately that the conservatives could not be any worse than Gair in government. Even if he regretted his words, his contributions to efforts at their dislodgement at election times were considered by many pundits to have left much to be desired. Everyone knew who Duggan had in mind when he remarked angrily at the 1963 party convention that certain people 'couldn't care less if the Labor Party is in

---

<sup>235</sup> Manfred Cross, former Federal Labor member for Brisbane, recalled that there was no set up. Mr Cross, who was present at the incident, recalled that Bukowski was heavily intoxicated and slurring his words. Telephone conversation with Manfred Cross, 12 February 2007.

<sup>236</sup> *Courier-Mail* 21 January 1960.

<sup>237</sup> Bill Power, 'For Labor – Unity at all Costs!', *SundayTruth* 23 April 1961.



power or opposition.’<sup>238</sup> While the parliamentarians savoured the dubious delights of the latter, the egregious Egerton liked to see himself as the preserver of all that was pure about a jaded Labor party that had become conservative and complacent after decades in office. The fact that he had contributed to its near destruction was rarely admitted, although in the *New age* of 22 October 1959 he conceded: ‘There is no doubt that an intelligent approach by the trade unions could have prevented handing the government of Queensland to our class enemies.’

Years after the split, Egerton and his cohorts, in the words of Ross McMullin, ‘cloaking themselves in a spurious militant purity’, would label dissidents pejoratively with the dismissive, nostalgic and inaccurate blanket epithet of ‘Groupers.’ The class enemies of the capitalist system ran the Labor radio station 4KQ, not as the more effective campaign and propaganda tool that Gair had advocated in his time, but on a purely commercial basis.<sup>239</sup> He and many other union leaders remained content to see the unionists in their care reap improvements in wages and living standards through the arbitration system rather than through legislation through the balmy economic times of the 1960s and early 1970s. In 1976, Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser offered him a knighthood for services to the union movement. To the disbelief and later chagrin of the ALP, whose policy was not to accept Imperial honours, he accepted. No one’s ire was assuaged when, in a tableau loaded with symbolism, Egerton, a former boilermaker, kneeled to receive his knighthood before the son of a boilermaker, Sir John Kerr, a one-time defender of the Groupers in New South Wales who the year before, dismissed the Whitlam government. The action cost Egerton his party membership, though he never relinquished hope of readmission. Sir John

---

<sup>238</sup> *Official record of the Queensland Labor-in-Politics convention, 1963* p 90.

<sup>239</sup> Ross McMullin, *The light on the hill: the Australian Labor Party 1891-1991*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1991, p 334.

Egerton later did commercials for a furniture company <sup>240</sup> and served as deputy mayor of the Gold Coast. He had easily outlived all the major players in the Queensland split when he died in December 1998.

There was no quick fix for the shattered Labor party in Queensland. Skilful gerrymandering of the electoral boundaries was frequently and volubly blamed, but the Labor share of the vote did not even approach the proportions needed for victory for another fifteen years. Groups within the faction-ridden party, often headed by trade union leaders who suffered from health problems associated with alcohol, concentrated more on building fiefdoms within the party rather than trying to win government. The Country-Liberal administration, if unexciting, was generally sound, and competent Liberal treasurers made the most of the balmy economic climate of the 1960s. With the notable exception of the Mt Isa strike of 1964-65, state politics was largely off the front pages in Queensland during the 1960s. Even the unions shared in the general prosperity, although they made their gains in wages through the courts rather than depending on legislation. Ironically, it was left to the coalition government to bring in the three weeks' leave: the number of weeks' leave was later increased to four. When the measure was introduced, concern for the economy, at least from the mainstream press, was minimal. As Bill Hayden put it in his memoirs: 'The economy did not turn belly-up as predicted by the newspapers: in fact the *Courier-Mail* seemed to have been struck instantly with laryngitis on the subject.'<sup>241</sup>

Jack Duggan soldiered on as Opposition leader and lost three more elections after the conflagration of 1957. Forced to resign as Labor leader after tax irregularities in 1966,

---

<sup>240</sup> *Sunday Telegraph* 10 July 1977.

<sup>241</sup> Bill Hayden. *Hayden: an autobiography*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1996, p 90.

he left Parliament in 1969 and moved into a second political career as a popular and capable deputy mayor (and briefly mayor) of Toowoomba. The party that housed his bitterest political enemies, the QLP, was long gone by the time Duggan died in 1993, and the perceived betrayal of his leader, along with his tax problems, were forgotten. Condolence motions in the Parliament depicted him as a loyal Labor hero. A deeply grieving Deputy Premier Tom Burns was uncharacteristically apprehensive about his ability to speak, saying : ‘I thought three or four times about whether I would talk today ... I might not make it, to be truthful.’ <sup>242</sup>

No member of Gair’s caucus before the split ever served in a government again. Attrition saw the numbers of the forty-nine intra-Labor combatants of 1957 diminished with each election through defeat, death or retirement. The last serving members of each side, Gair supporter Les Diplock and Duggan supporter Pat Hanlon retired in 1972 and 1974 respectively. Gair’s last surviving parliamentary supporter, Brian Kehoe, died in February 2005. Kehoe proved loyal to his leader. Six years after the split and still running under the QLP banner, he would suffer a dislocated finger at a political street meeting, the same one in which one irate spectator would hurl a pie in Gair’s direction. <sup>243</sup> At the time of writing (2007) the only survivor of the 1957 Labor caucus is Pat Hanlon, who despite allegedly evincing some sympathy for Gair’s plight to Gair personally <sup>244</sup> could not find it in himself to desert his party for the sake of his father’s old deputy.

---

<sup>242</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 13 July 1993, pp 3372, 3377.

<sup>243</sup> Peter Morley, ‘Party Split Ended Term in Parliament’ [obituary of Brian Kehoe], *Courier-Mail* 24 February 2005; *Sunday Truth* 19 May 1963.

<sup>244</sup> *Courier-Mail* 19 July 1957.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: GAIR IN ECLIPSE, 1957 - 1964

'I don't recognize the QLP because it is not a Queensland Party, not Labor and not a party.' Alderman Norm Buchan, *Courier-Mail* 15 July 1957.

'You are not the Premier now: you're a little pot-bellied man.' W B J G Sparkes, member for Aubigny, in the Queensland Legislative Assembly, 21 November 1957, *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 21 November 1957, p 1257.

'The Queensland Labor Party stands for the ideals of the great Labor Movement without the taint of Communism or full-scale Socialism. We stand for the maintenance of our democratic, Australian way of life and we stand for the encouragement of a strong co-operative system and Social Justice for all.' Vince Gair, opening the QLP's second state conference, *Standard* 2 December 1959.

## 8.1 INTRODUCTION

Few politicians in Queensland political history have had as pronounced a reversal of fortune as that experienced by Vincent Clair Gair on 3 August 1957. Although he would remain visible, both in Parliament and out of it, his influence during the next six years would be negligible compared to the eventful periods that came before and after.

This period of his life, when his political life was in eclipse, can be divided into two parts. For the first part of this period, from 1957 to 1960 he remained in Parliament, and as a party leader, albeit of the smallest party rather than the largest. Gair remained in close physical proximity to his previous base of operations, but for the first time, he was not aligned with the party in power. He was politically dead, but his physical form still haunted the corridors of Parliament House and the echoes of his voice, once described by Alan Reid as having ‘just the hint of a (Churchillian?) lisp’<sup>1</sup> were heard in the Chamber.

This period ended with his defeat in his South Brisbane seat in the elections of 1960. He remained in politics as QLP leader, until the merger with the federal DLP in 1962. During this time the Country-Liberal government, controversially, appointed him to a post in the Bureau of Labour and Industry, within the department he had headed as minister fifteen years before. Finally, he was successful in winning election to Federal parliament, on his second attempt, and the second part of his political career began.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Sun herald* 30 September 1956.

## 8.2 A FADING CAUSE

As he contemplated the political annihilation of most of his followers Gair was uncharacteristically philosophical. ‘The people were the final and supreme body to decide political issues.’ Of his colleagues, most of whom were now jobless and only able to collect refunds of their contributions from the parliamentary superannuation fund, he said: ‘I am sure that even those who could not find themselves able to support them will acknowledge their courage and the high principle under which they acted.’<sup>2</sup> Despite the decimation of his party, at the age of three and a half months, he still saw a role for it in the realigned landscape of post-split Queensland politics. ‘The battle standard has been raised and the QLP will be the rallying point for a gathering host of middle-of-the-road electors who abhor the demagogic leftism of the ALP and reject the reactionary and outdated Toryism of the coalition parties.’<sup>3</sup>

No member of the ‘reactionary and outdated’ incoming government had ever served in an administration before. As Denis Murphy has noted, the genial Nicklin took some time to find his feet as premier.<sup>4</sup> In 1983, the Country-Liberal coalition’s first minister for transport, Gordon Chalk admitted to me: ‘We knew bugger all about administration.’ Gair watched from the sidelines, doubtless frustrated at his own political impotency and at the antics of those he considered amateurs.

---

<sup>2</sup> *Courier-Mail* 5, 6 August 1957.

<sup>3</sup> Vince Gair, ‘As I See It’, *Telegraph* 7 August 1957.

<sup>4</sup> D J Murphy, ‘The Premiers of Queensland’, *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland* vol 10 no 3, 1977-78.

In November the first QLP conference was held. 150 delegates met to discuss 478 agenda items, showing what the *Sunday truth* of 17 November called ‘adherence to a middle-of-the-road line in all matters’, with policy resolutions showing ‘a steady adherence to traditional Labor principles, with strong modifications of the socialisation objective.’ A few days after the conference Gair was euphoric over how things had proceeded:

*On this occasion all items discussed were settled on their merits after full and effective debate. There were no factions and no attempt to dominate by any section of the conference.*

*The perfect blend of youth, experience, imagination, discretion and concise expression kept proceedings on a high plane and was conducive to valuable results.*<sup>5</sup>

Walsh was similarly ebullient, hyperbolically describing the inaugural Queensland Labor Party conference as ‘unquestionably the greatest of its kind in the political history of Queensland.’<sup>6</sup>

Despite the new party’s self-perceived encouraging start, the New Year brought undoubted signs that the QLP was heading for irrelevance even faster than anyone expected. On 6 March 1958, Gair launched a want of confidence motion on the inexperienced coalition government. The main thrusts of Gair’s attack were unemployment, the abolition of price control and police force administration. The Australian Labor Party was not supportive, with opposition leader Les Wood remarking that while he had no confidence in the government, he had no confidence in the Queensland Labor Party either. Given his numbers, Gair could not have expected anything but defeat on the floor of the House, but it was even more

---

<sup>5</sup> Vince Gair, ‘As I See It’, *Telegraph* 28 November 1957.

<sup>6</sup> *Telegraph* 12 December 1957.

humiliating than could have been expected when the ALP members walked from the chamber, not even wanting to hear him out. The motion was defeated thirty-six to seven, with only the QLP members present voting for it.<sup>7</sup> Wood later claimed that Gair's no confidence motion was 'phony' because he, Gair, had not previously spoken in support of an ALP move for the disallowance of an order-in-council whereby the prices of essential foods were removed from control.<sup>8</sup> Sometime during the debate, Gair attacked the deputy ALP leader Eric Lloyd. The return barb, not from Lloyd but from young Pat Hanlon, son of Gair's old boss, must have stung him: 'He [Lloyd] has more responsibility than you. He is deputy opposition leader. You are nothing.'<sup>9</sup>

The QLP suffered another humiliating defeat with the repeal of the contentious provisions 1957 *University of Queensland Act Amendment Act*. Gair alleged that many University students, although not directly affected by the bill, had been pressured into signing petitions supporting it. Once more the QLP voted on its own, but the repeal went through, fifty-two to nine, with the ALP supporting the government.<sup>10</sup>

The ALP parliamentary leader, Les Wood, died suddenly on 29 March 1958. Gair's bete-noir, Jack Duggan, had lost his seat of Toowoomba in the turmoil of 1957, and failed to win Gregory in a by-election on 5 October of that year. Wood died tragically young, but his death enabled Duggan to return to Parliament. Duggan won Wood's former seat, Toowoomba North, on 31 May, but the QLP candidate lost his deposit,

---

<sup>7</sup> Clem Lack, *Three decades of Queensland political history 1929-1960*, Brisbane: Government Printer, [1962], p 499.

<sup>8</sup> Les Wood, 'Beware of Crocodile Tears', *Labor news* March 1958.

<sup>9</sup> *Telegraph* 6 March 1958.

<sup>10</sup> Lack, *Three decades of Queensland political history*, p 500.



an indication, according to Frank Waters of ‘the average Australian’s contempt for McCarthyism.’<sup>11</sup>

By this time, however, the QLP was showing signs that its use-by date had come around already. In the municipal elections of April 1958 it polled disastrously in Brisbane, with its levels of support declining from 23 percent in the state elections of June 1957 to 9 percent in April 1958. Statewide, QLP victories were rare, although they won some council berths in Rockhampton, Cloncurry, Mulgrave and Babinda. Gair said that he was disappointed but that municipal polls were different to state and Federal ones.<sup>12</sup>

### 8.3 RUMOURS OF RECONCILIATION

Despite the ineffectuality of the QLP, the post-split bitterness was extraordinarily enduring. Even before the election in August, there were more hopeful spirits in the QLP that hoped that the schism in Labor’s ranks could soon be settled amicably.<sup>13</sup> Late in 1957 Victorian Senator Pat Kennelly, former Federal Secretary of the Labor Party (1946-1954) was rumoured to be in close touch with Ted Walsh, still a personal friend, regarding a rapprochement between the two sides. When quizzed on this,

---

<sup>11</sup> *Labor news* May 1958.

<sup>12</sup> *Courier-Mail* 21 April 1958.

<sup>13</sup> See for example, the pamphlet from the QLP candidate for Murrumba, on Brisbane’s northern outskirts. ‘It must be clearly understood by all the electors of Queensland that we are still members of that grand family of people who comprise the Labor Movement, and, as is the case in most families, we have had a disagreement. This is entirely our own business: we will correct it in our own time; and to the complete satisfaction of all members of the family.’ *A message to the electors of Murrumba*, Gair Papers, Series 7 Elections Box 7 Folder 61, National Library of Australia.

Walsh replied cryptically and not very helpfully: 'I have been spending a lot of time in my garden lately.'<sup>14</sup>

Even before voting on the floor of Parliament had demonstrated the impotency of the QLP's parliamentary wing, the ALP, depleted in numbers as it was, was starting to realise that it did not need the help of the apostates. Many branches had been approached by recanting members, and the QCE advised that any former member could rejoin as long as they had not actively taken part in or assisted the 1957 QLP campaign.<sup>15</sup> Reunification moves were not even well supported by parliamentarians on either side. The *Courier-Mail* reported on 7 March that 'A minority of members on both sides indicate privately that a rapprochement would be desirable, but it ends here.' Some elements in the ALP were relieved that the break had occurred: 'Several people who had no identity with our policy ended the masquerade ... Casting off that which does not belong is not a split, it is a cleansing ...'<sup>16</sup>

Although he was hardly in a position to do so, Walsh laid down conditions for reunification early in May. The unity conditions were that Communist control be removed from the QCE, and that it be recognised that no outside body could dictate to the elected representatives of the people.<sup>17</sup> Nothing in the political career of the pragmatic and hardheaded Walsh suggests that he seriously expected the governing body of his former party to first reconstitute its executive, and then divest itself of an important part of its power, especially when a premier, nine Cabinet ministers and

---

<sup>14</sup> *Courier-Mail* 24 November 1957.

<sup>15</sup> *Sunday Mail* 2 February 1958.

<sup>16</sup> *Labor news* December 1957.

<sup>17</sup> *Courier-Mail* 8 May 1958.

fifteen backbenchers had lately been expelled to confirm the supremacy of the organisational wing over the parliamentary one.

The QCE decided on 22 May 1958 that ‘under no circumstances’ would leading figures in the QLP or those who opposed ALP candidates be admitted.<sup>18</sup> Gair commented: ‘It is inconceivable that ALP leaders would honestly expect genuine Labor men and women of the QLP to seek re-entry into a political party which is collaborating with the very organization which jeopardises our personal and national welfare.’<sup>19</sup> Even so, in early September two QLP members and former ALP ministers, Tom Foley and Bill Power tried in Parliament to heal the breach. ALP members sat silent as Foley spoke in conciliatory terms. As he sat down, Gair said to him: ‘What about their alliance with Communists?’ When his turn came to speak, Power, whose later utterances in the newspapers showed him to be perhaps the most reluctant of Gair’s Cabinet followers, said that he had no quarrel with the ALP itself, but with the way in which directions were given to parliamentary members. But when he said that he would not give his preferences to the non-ALP parties, he was applauded.<sup>20</sup>

Later on, tentative behind-the-scenes moves for rapprochement, if not reunification were rumoured, but if these moves transpired they were not followed by any concrete gains in the direction desired by the instigators. Late in the year, the rumours took a turn that would have alarmed QLP supporters. It was claimed that if the Country-Liberal government reintroduced preferential voting for the next state election, then the ALP would give its second preferences to the government. Such a move would

---

<sup>18</sup> *Labor news* May 1958.

<sup>19</sup> *Telegraph* 29 May 1958.

<sup>20</sup> *Courier-Mail* 5 September 1958. See chapters 6 and 7 for references to Power’s first hand newspaper accounts of the split.

have seen all QLP members defeated, with the exception of Walsh in Bundaberg. The move would have also had a dire effect on the ALP, with its parliamentary numbers going down to six or seven if, as seemed extremely likely, the QLP retaliated by giving their second preferences to the government as well. However, the scenario remained an academic one. Preferential voting was reintroduced, but not until 1962, and the 1960 election was fought once more on a first-past-the-post basis. That it could be reported, with presumably reasonable authority, that the ALP was even considering such a *kamikaze* course indicated the depths of the bitterness that the split engendered.<sup>21</sup>

The ALP-QLP breach remained unhealed, but the rumours continued. In March 1959 a newspaper report forecast that the two Labor parties would reunite: the ALP press called it ‘a grouper-inspired fantasy’, and Schmella said that there was ‘no chance’ of it happening.<sup>22</sup> A later article on the same topic said it all with the title: ‘An Emphatic NO From Labor Rank and File’.<sup>23</sup>

Jack Duggan claimed in mid-1959 that the ALP was ‘extending the hand of friendship’ to ‘misled’ rank and file members, and that ‘intermediate’ members who had held executive positions in branches or had taken a leading part in the breakaway movement were having their cases for readmission considered on an individual basis by the QCE inner executive. But he reaffirmed that Gair and Walsh would never be readmitted.<sup>24</sup> Gair denied Duggan’s claims, and took another swipe at his former deputy: ‘I have heard it repeatedly stated by our members that if the QLP ceased to

---

<sup>21</sup> Lack, *Three decades of Queensland political history, 1929-1960*, pp 512-513: *Sunday Mail* 30 November 1958.

<sup>22</sup> *Labor news* 13 March 1959.

<sup>23</sup> *Labor news* 23 April 1959.

<sup>24</sup> *Telegraph* 23 June 1959.

exist, they would not return or support a party led by a man who publicly stated that he was prepared to do what was wrong and unwise if he was directed by his irresponsible bosses to do so.’<sup>25</sup>

Walsh made another plea for unity in the state parliament in August:

*The QLP members are as anxious to see unity brought about in the Labour movement as any member in this House.*

*But the people who go around talking about the alleged attempts of this one and that one who are trying to get back into the ALP are uttering deliberate falsehoods.*

*There are conditions on which any member of the QLP will consider going back to the ALP.*<sup>26</sup>

But Walsh was not offering the ALP anything that they needed. According to Duggan ‘there is unity within the ALP: greater unity than we have had for many years.’

Feelings against readmission of leading QLP members, hard as they were before, had hardened even more since the Mulgrave by-election of 6 June 1959, when the ALP candidate had increased the party’s 1957 tally, mostly at the expense of Charlie English, former QLP member. And the QCE was wary of the potential for disruption in readmitting dissidents: one QCE delegate commented on 14 August: ‘It would be better for Labor to remain in opposition for another 10 years than expose itself to another split by readmitting QLP leaders.’<sup>27</sup>

There had been no improvement in the situation by 9 September when, in the House, Gair himself made a plea for unity of the Labour movement in Parliament, citing the two conditions that Walsh had laid down in May of the previous year: the freedom of Parliament from the direction of outside bodies, and the removal of Communist

---

<sup>25</sup> *Courier-Mail* 24 June 1959.

<sup>26</sup> *Standard*, 26 August 1959.

<sup>27</sup> *Courier-Mail* 15 August 1959. The Mulgrave by-election of 1959 is dealt with more fully below.

influence from the ALP. After a swipe at the Country-Liberal administration for demonstrating after two years in office ‘that they are incapable of sane, impartial administration and that they care little for the needs of the people who lack financial strength’, he submitted ‘quite objectively, and without bitterness, that as a desperate alternative next year, an ALP government under the party’s present leadership could be an extremely dangerous one.’ He then launched into the very familiar theme of outside domination of the parliamentary Labor party, and Communist and Fabian influence within.

Gair then made an extraordinary offer, which, it is safe to say, he never envisaged had the slightest chance of being taken up:

*If I am regarded as a definite bar to the development of unity amongst all genuine non- Communists in the labour movement of this state, I shall cheerfully forego a prominent role in any merger, provided I am satisfied that the conditions that I have enumerated will be carried out. No honest Labor man would do otherwise, to obtain a proper reconstruction of the once-great Labor party.*

His concluding remarks were a combination of QLP advertisement and rhetoric:

*Due recognition of the family unit, private enterprise, individual ownership, socialisation where economically necessary, co-operative enterprises, credit unions, the untrammelled right to enjoy the four freedoms, social justice to all sections of the people and full employment for the workers – these are the things for which the Queensland Labor Party stands for today and in the future. These are the intrinsic signs of the social order for which true Labor strives, and this goal cannot be achieved while Labor occupies the Opposition benches.*

*The Labor party’s true worth has always been found in the great legislative reforms it has introduced while in government. Let all decent Labor men act now, by isolating the scourge which divides us. Let us come together to work conjointly for the realisation of Labor’s true ideals and for the maintenance of*

*all we cherish. Let us fight to a man to maintain our democracy and to defeat Communism in this country.*<sup>28</sup>

As might have been expected, Gair's olive branch – 'barbed with stinging nettles and even sharper thorns', according to the *Courier-Mail* of 11 September - was met with derision. Duggan commented that Gair's plea for unity could be construed as 'a dramatic political swan song of a prima donna bowing out.'<sup>29</sup> A few days later, his contempt for Gair's offer had not diminished. 'That Mr Gair should propose terms at this stage suggest the last pathetic shift of a harassed general who obstinately refused to face the fact that his army has run out on him. Soon the QLP will be like the proverbial Portuguese army – all generals and no rank and file.'<sup>30</sup> On 15 September former Speaker John Mann said in Parliament that QLP members wanting to return to the fold should apply for reentry to the ALP: 'There is no hope for Gair at all, but if others want to get back let them comply with rule 98.' Mann claimed that not one QLP member had applied to re-enter their former party.<sup>31</sup> He later said there was no hope of the ALP letting Walsh or Hilton back either: '[T]here is no place in our party for them. I am a good enough bushman to know that if you have a horse that bolts once, he bolts again.'<sup>32</sup>

His overtures rejected, Gair was characteristically huffy. He claimed that Duggan feared having to stand down from the Parliamentary leadership if there was unity, and that 'the attitude of some other ALP parliamentarians was aptly summed up by one of

---

<sup>28</sup> *Standard* 26 September 1959.

<sup>29</sup> *Courier-Mail* 10 September 1959.

<sup>30</sup> *Courier-Mail* 15 September 1959.

<sup>31</sup> *Courier-Mail* 16 September 1959. Rule 98 set out that ALP members could not be members of an organisation that in the opinion of the executive had an objective conflicting with the constitution and platform of the ALP. In Parliament on 4 August 1966, Jack Duggan claimed that Mick Brosnan, former QLP member for Fortitude Valley, 'would almost charge into my office and wish to engage in conversation with me about earlier times. He did express to me a wish that he could renew some measure of association with the Australian Labor Party, of which he had been a member.'

<sup>32</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 23 November 1962, p 1902.

them recently when he said he did not want unity, as the readmission of former Ministers from the QLP would prevent him from attaining Cabinet rank.’ Duggan and the anonymous ALP member need not have worried. ‘I assure Mr Duggan that QLP parliamentarians and branch members have no intention whatever of seeking unity with the ALP while the Communist influence prevails within.’<sup>33</sup> There was another sign that as far as politics was concerned, Gair was losing his enthusiasm: in late 1959, no doubt mindful of haemorrhaging support levels for his party and the bleak prospect of re-election after the redistribution, he was quoted as saying that he surveyed the contemporary political scene as an onlooker. His enemies in the Labor press commented, prophetically: ‘After 1960 he and his group will certainly be onlookers.’<sup>34</sup>

After the QLP rout of 1960, the new leader Paul Hilton tried once more to mend the rift, but he was rebuffed. He later told Parliament:

*What was the result of the sincere and genuine overtures made to heal the rift in the Labor party and put it again on a sound and firm keel? So bitter was the hostility of the dominating clique at the Trades Hall on this question of unity that even before the letter reached the executive body of the ALP, a meeting was held at which this proposal was damned.*<sup>35</sup>

By 1963, with their parliamentary representation reduced to two, the QLP could only arouse academic interest with their policies, despite what Lettice and Clark called ‘some interesting suggestions for Queensland’s future government.’ The party

---

<sup>33</sup> *Courier-Mail* 16 September 1959.

<sup>34</sup> *New age* 5 November 1959.

<sup>35</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 23 November 1962, p 1900.



workers were enthusiastic, but campaigning was reportedly disorganized, especially in some country areas.<sup>36</sup>

In 1963 Paul Hilton lost Carnarvon to the Country Party, who had concentrated their efforts in the seat. Hilton's defeat reduced the QLP parliamentary representation to one. The party had contested 60 seats for a paltry 55 711 votes, down from 91 212 votes in 1960. There could be no doubt that the QLP was finished. A few days later, the party's governing central council called for reconciliation talks with the 'moderate majority' of the ALP, saying that if the offer was rejected, the QLP would work to ensure that its preferences would keep the ALP out of office. Nothing came of this last and faintly pathetic appeal, the last shot in the locker for a party that on the state scene was now irrelevant.<sup>37</sup>

For reasons best known to himself, Gair would later alter his unambiguously documented role in the QLP's brief history as a would-be reconciliator. Despite his efforts of September 1959, rhetorical as they were, he claimed there was never any ambiguity as to where he stood on the issue of reconciliation with the ALP:

*I am one of the original few in the executive of the DLP who never talked, never gave any consideration of any matter affecting rapprochement. I couldn't see the feasibility of it, couldn't see that it was practicable that I would make bedfellows with people who had without question demonstrated they were not members of the Australian Labor Party as I knew it.*

---

<sup>36</sup> Margaret N Lettice and Claire Skerman Clark, 'The 1963 Queensland State Election', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* November 1963. The 'interesting ideas' that Lettice and Clark noted were proposals for assistance to farmers' co-operative companies, and for the transformation of the Agricultural Bank into a full-scale State Bank incorporating hire-purchase facilities to reduce hire-purchase rates.

<sup>37</sup> *Courier-Mail* 6 June 1963.

*There was much waste of time and a good deal of talk about what conditions we could go back on and all this kind of thing. As far as I was concerned I never even wasted any time even thinking about it.*<sup>38</sup>

#### **8.4 THE QLP: DISUNITY AND DECLINE**

Barely a year after their formation it was clear that the QLP was different to the well-disciplined ALP in terms of voting solidarity in Parliament. In October 1958, when former ALP Speaker John Mann moved that his parliamentary colleague, Cecil Jesson, be allowed to continue a speech, the QLP vote on the matter was split three ways, with some supporting the motion, others (including Gair) voting against it, and one member, Bill Power leaving the House and not voting on the question. 'Each 'QLP' faction glared angrily at each other while the count took place', an editorial in the ALP organ, *New Age*, reported with undisguised glee. 'Just goes to show, renegades can't stick, whatever their company.'<sup>39</sup> In November the QLP demonstrated something considerably less than party solidarity when Minister for Labour and Industry Ken Morris introduced legislation for secret, court-controlled ballots in unions, claiming that the move would enable unionists to rid themselves of Communist control. It was a reform that Gair had dreamed of introducing, but he was disappointed in its application, as most of the unions likely to be affected by the bill were moderate and untouched by Communist disruption anyway. Gair called the bill 'a poor, anaemic, feeble attempt' to deal with serious problems, and wanted to know why ballots could not have been made compulsory for all unions. But some of his colleagues felt that the new legislation was better than nothing. In dealing with the

---

<sup>38</sup> John Edwards, 'The Balance-of-Power Men', *Australian Financial Review* 6 July 1972.

<sup>39</sup> *New age* 10 October 1958.

provisions when the bill was in committee, the QLP showed itself to be a less than cohesive unit, with its members dividing on some of the bill's clauses.<sup>40</sup>

On 26 March 1959 the sitting Country Party member for the Far North Queensland seat of Mulgrave, Bob Watson died. The QLP ran with its former member, Charlie English, and saw the by-election as a chance to re-establish their credentials with the electorate. But the lead story in the *Standard* seemed to indicate that the whiff of defeat was already in their nostrils:

*We know that the electors there will give us their support at the polls if we can only get our message over to them. We are certain that sooner or later our message will be generally received and understood, but there will be no consolation for us if it is then too late. Time is limited and events are moving fast.*<sup>41</sup>

The by-election saw the seat retained by the Country Party, but the ALP was heartened by the ten percent increase in their vote in the seat compared to the result of less than 20 months before. The QLP vote decreased by 11.67 percent, despite English, having represented the seat between 1953 and 1957. No doubt with great satisfaction, the *New age* forecast 'total annihilation' for the QLP, which was 'almost certain to disappear completely.'<sup>42</sup> As the Country Party vote remained almost at the same level in 1957 and 1959, the overwhelming impression is that the ALP vote was recovering, a lot quicker than anyone expected, at the expense of the QLP. There were signs that the supporters of the Gair's cause were losing heart. Even Gair admitted that QLP organisation in Mulgrave was not as good it had been in 1957 and that many members had felt English had no hope of winning. 'Charlie English knew his chances

---

<sup>40</sup> Lack, *Three decades of Queensland political history 1929-1960*, p 522- 523.

<sup>41</sup> *Standard*, 22 April 1959.

<sup>42</sup> *New age* 18 June 1959.

of victory were remote, but he did not hesitate to carry our banner in the contest when asked to do so, although it was to cost him considerable personal effort, time and money.’<sup>43</sup>

## 8.5 THE ELECTORAL REDISTRIBUTION OF 1959

Impending redistributions are always the stuff of rumours, and the months leading up to the redistribution of 1959 were no exception. The ALP newspaper, the *New age* claimed that ‘influential’ members of the Country Liberal government wanted Gair re-elected in South Brisbane because his defeat would ‘annihilate’ any remaining QLP prestige. Presumably the coalition government, to paraphrase the words of the French writer Mauriac on post-war Germany, liked the Labor party so much that they preferred it when there were two of them!<sup>44</sup> It was rumoured that the South Brisbane boundaries would be fixed so as to retain ‘what are regarded as pockets of the most fanatical QLP electors.’ Additionally, it was reported that the South Brisbane Liberal party branch was concerned that would only get token support in 1960, and that the government had already assured Gair that he would get campaign concessions and privileges.<sup>45</sup> In early 1960 there was a strong move by the Country Liberal government to not oppose Gair at all, the reasoning being that Gair, who would sometimes support the government, would probably win if no Liberal opposed him. On the other hand, in a three-way split the official Labor candidate, Col Bennett would probably win, and provide no support to the Country Liberal government at all.

---

<sup>43</sup>V C Gair, ‘Mulgrave Result is a Warning’, *Standard* 17 June 1959.

<sup>44</sup> There are many versions of Mauriac’s quote on the temporary division of postwar Germany into two nations. I have not been able to find the original source, but a version of it was used in the American edition of *Newsweek* on 20 September 1989.

<sup>45</sup> *New age* 18 June 1959. While the remaining QLP electors could hardly be described as ‘fanatical’, in 1957 Gair had done well in some booths, notably Dutton Park and South Brisbane and, especially, the Mater Misericordiae Hospital. The major booth where his vote was weakest was Highgate Hill. As is often the case, the boundaries could have been drawn in a way to give him some very significant advantages, but what transpired was the reverse.

But the Liberal party opposed the move, arguing that they had to take a long range view rather than act out of expediency.<sup>46</sup>

Whatever the influence the coalition government had over the redistributing of the South Brisbane boundaries, it was not channelled towards the retention of the sitting member. If Gair was expecting favours from the redistribution, either for his party or for himself, an unpleasant surprise was in store.

Gair would have foreseen major changes in his constituency well before the redistribution. South Brisbane had declined in constituent numbers from 11 009 in the 1950 election to 8 826 in the 1957 election. If the seat was not to be abolished altogether, major changes were needed to bring the numbers up to parity. The new boundaries contained many changes for the electorate that Gair had served for nearly thirty years.

After the redistribution, the boundaries of the new South Brisbane electorate now took almost 4 500 new electors. Gair complained of the disproportionately high number of voters now in South Brisbane compared to the enrolments in the contiguous electorates. Of the twenty-eight electorates in the Metropolitan zone, South Brisbane was now the sixth most populous, thus increasing Gair's responsibilities dramatically, at least in terms of constituent numbers.

One important change to Gair's boundaries was the addition of the suburb of Kangaroo Point, which had not experienced Gair the local member. Political

---

<sup>46</sup> *Sunday Mail* 14 February 1960. The Liberals were, presumably, hoping to eventually win the seat, which they eventually did in 1974. It reverted back to the ALP in 1977 and is still (2007) in Labor hands.

commentator Tom Truman ventured that Gair might get a good proportion of the Catholic vote here, but added, presciently, that his ALP opponent was almost certain to be a practicing Catholic as well, a useful qualification in an electorate where over thirty percent were of that faith. Gair estimated that less than half of his former constituents now lived in his electorate. As outlined previously, he had always farmed his electorate well, routinely attending committee meetings of the schools and the like, even as a premier beleaguered by an impending split. Now he had lost the votes of those who might have been not particularly sympathetic to his policies but who had experience of his worth as their local member.<sup>47</sup>

Gair wrote to the State Electoral Commissioner on 6 October, objecting to the overall failure of the redistribution to observe ‘natural boundaries’, saying that it was ‘indefensible when it is considered that the variation has assisted in giving South Brisbane 1 100 more electors than Kurilpa.’ He felt that of the inner electorates south of the Brisbane River, his had been singled out:

*It should be noted by the Commissioner that the enrolments of Norman and Kurilpa, the two adjoining electorates to the proposed South Brisbane electorate, number 10 919 and 11 061 respectively. These figures are both less than the quota established for zone 1 ‘Metropolitan Zone’ and are more than 1 000 less than the South Brisbane enrolment. The electorates on the perimeter of Norman and Kurilpa, viz Greenslopes, Hawthorne and Yeronga, are also below the quota. It is rather significant that in the area containing the six inner electorates on the south side of the river, South Brisbane has by far the biggest enrolment.*<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> Tom Truman, ‘Fraudulent Electoral Systems in Qld’, *Australian quarterly* December 1959; Colin Hughes, *Images and issues: the Queensland state elections of 1963 and 1966*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1969, p 263, and p 266 for map of the old and new South Brisbane electorate. For Gair’s complaint on the high numbers of voters in South Brisbane, see *Courier-Mail* 7 October 1959.

<sup>48</sup> V C Gair to State Electorate Commissioner, 6 October 1959. A/6300 1959 Electoral Districts Commission. Objections. Queensland State Archives.

Gair's opponent was Col Bennett, a prominent Brisbane City Council alderman and barrister. (Ironically, Bennett shared chambers and was close friends with Condon Byrne, Gair's former secretary who would later serve alongside Gair as a DLP Senator. In 1993 he would deliver Byrne's eulogy.)<sup>49</sup> Bennett had been the alderman for Kurilpa since 1949. At the election of 1960, votes from the parts of the Kurilpa ward (identical to the Kurilpa electorate) placed in the state seat of South Brisbane would reflect his popularity.<sup>50</sup> But for now the rearrangement of the Kurilpa boundaries was causing him angst: one supporter wrote to the Electoral Commissioner complaining that 'the very compact Kurilpa electorate, defined by four streets and the river, has given place to one of extraordinary configuration, bounded by 19 streets and the river.'<sup>51</sup> Bennett's wife, Eileen, in her capacity as secretary of the Kurilpa ALP complained about the boundaries of the proposed Kurilpa, which she said had no community of interest, no 'satisfactory' shopping centre, no centrally situated public hall and no hotel. 'Residents from both ends of the electorate are incensed because by such redistribution they become severed from their age-old associations and regard this proposal as political.'<sup>52</sup>

Bennett would continue to have issues with the boundaries. After nine years as the member he would call the South Brisbane electorate 'a most unnatural one, having no

---

<sup>49</sup> 'A Man For All Seasons, A Friend For All', [obituary of Condon Byrne], *Catholic leader* 12 December 1993.

<sup>50</sup> Colin Hughes, *Images and issues*, p 264. Bennett is remember chiefly for his role in blowing the whistle on the police corruption centred around the National Hotel in Brisbane. An ALP moderate, he lost his endorsement in January 1972. Running as an independent, he failed to retain his seat in the state elections in May that year. In 1974 he unsuccessfully contested Kurilpa for the National Party.

<sup>51</sup> J Caldwell to Kevin Seeney, 7 October 1959. A/6300 1959 Electoral Districts Commissioner Record of Meetings, M22. Queensland State Archives.

<sup>52</sup> Eileen Bennett, Secretary Kurilpa Branch of the ALP to Electoral Districts Commissioner, 2 October 1959. A/6300 1959 Electoral Districts Commissioner Record of Meetings, M25. Queensland State Archives.

common community centre, Church or sporting arena.’<sup>53</sup> There were thirty-five protests made against the boundaries created by the 1959 redistribution. Three of them were against the South Brisbane/Kurilpa boundaries but all were rejected.<sup>54</sup>

None of the QLP members could really take any joy from the redistribution. All eleven members had had their boundaries changed, and Haughton, the North Queensland electorate held by former works minister Col McCathie, disappeared altogether. Academic and future Senator Max Poulter said of their situation:

*The redistribution has in no way helped the QLP. It may be fairly said that it has made their chances in the 1960 election very difficult. Some experts anticipate they will disappear completely and the most optimistic observers anticipate four or five seats at the most.*<sup>55</sup>

That anticipation was well founded.

## **8.6 THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN OF 1960**

By 1960, many of those who supported the QLP in the heady days immediately following the split had either gone back to the ALP or were eschewing political involvement altogether. Those that remained found themselves very busy. From his residence at Newmarket, Brisbane, unsubtly named ‘Santa Maria’ [sic], QLP stalwart George Cook wrote to Frank Dowling, the secretary of the DLP in Victoria on the preparation for the election campaign in Queensland.

---

<sup>53</sup> C J Bennett to T J Burns, 11 August 1969. Waters Papers, privately held, but photocopy held by author.

<sup>54</sup> A/6300 1959 Electoral Districts Commissioner Record of Meetings. Queensland State Archives.

<sup>55</sup> Max Poulter, ‘The 1959 Queensland Electoral Redistribution’, *APSA news* December 1959.



The QLP sent letters outlining their aims, objects and history to the ministers of all Christian denominations in Queensland, and to every voluntary organisations they could find. Cook elaborated on the administrative processes needed to send the letters: ‘When I say the QLP sent them out, the reality is that Harry Wright [QLP organiser] and I sent them out with the approval of Jim Judge our Secretary and Vince Gair our leader.’ Cook informed Dowling of the expenses involved in sending material to ministers in rural Queensland: ‘The cost in postage for Queensland country was £8. I know because I paid it myself.’ Clearly support for the cause, such as it was, was flagging.<sup>56</sup> This did not stop the party organ, the *Standard*, from talking up the QLP’s prospects. Under the promising headline ‘QLP Can Govern’, the paper noted, with breathtaking optimism, that if the QLP doubled its 1957 tally of 160 000 votes, ‘Queensland will have a return to the best type of Labor government, which it had prior to 1957 and for the forty years before that.’<sup>57</sup>

Gair delivered the 1960 policy speech for his party on 9 May. He saved his most fearsome metaphors for the ALP, describing it as ‘a prostrate giant, through whose gaunt and fleshless body the Red-ants roam at will.’ QLP policies, worthwhile or not, attracted little critical attention: they included price controls on essential goods, clean union ballots, the reconstruction of the basic wage system by a tribunal constructed

---

<sup>56</sup> George Cook to Frank Dowling, 21 April 1960 and 30 April 1960. The letter of 21 April was attached to a typewritten letter from Harold Wright, ‘for and on behalf of the publicity committee’, on QLP letterhead, and dated 11 April. This letter was sent to ministers of religion and summarized aims and objects of the QLP. The letter of 30 April was attached to a typewritten letter, ‘for and on behalf of the publicity committee’, but not signed by Wright, and dated 27 April. This letter was sent out to voluntary organisations, and summarized aims and objects, as well as providing a history of the party. Both letters are in the DLP papers, State Library of Victoria, MS10389, B/2/10, Folder marked ‘QLP.’

<sup>57</sup> *Standard* 27 April, 11 May 1960. Oddly, the same article, probably written by the ever optimistic Harold Wright, appeared as the leading article in two consecutive editions.

specifically for the purpose, subsidies for capital expenditure on non-government schools, increased housing loans and marriage loans of £500 to young couples.<sup>58</sup>

Gair outlined the philosophy of the QLP:

*It is not a socialist party. We believe in the social utilisation of the nation's resources ... in constitutional state control of public utilities only in those cases where private enterprise fails to give, or deliberately denies satisfactory public service. We believe the existing social order should be improved by the extension of co-operatives and credit unions, by the establishment of wider group ownership, based on common interests and aspirations.*

Some of the election policies and promises were middle-of-the-road, if a little lacking on specifics. He promised 'humane, democratic government', and 'a genuine fight against Communist and ALP Fabian socialism', along with the curbing of monopolies, price control on essentials and a new basic wage 'in line with present-day standards.'

Gair's speech and what it promised received some grudging respect from the press.

The *Rockhampton Morning Bulletin* conceded that 'the QLP has compounded a more comprehensive election platform than the major parties, and there are some parts of it that both could adopt with advantage.'<sup>59</sup> The *Townsville Daily Bulletin* reminded its readers that 'Mr Gair is in a position to make many promises as the indications are that he will not be called on to redeem them', but also that Queenslanders should 'continue to tender him that measure of respect which was evident when he

---

<sup>58</sup> Lack, *Three decades of Queensland political history 1929-1960*, p 572. For a listing of QLP policies for the worker, the farmer, small business, New Australians and the family, see *Standard* 11 May 1960.

<sup>59</sup> *Rockhampton Morning Bulletin* 10 May 1960.

challenged the bully three years ago.’<sup>60</sup> The *Courier-Mail* was slightly more severe, noting of Gair’s promises that ‘he advocates them with a boldness that comes from knowing that he and his party will not be called upon to deliver these goods in the state’s next Parliament’, but conceding that the speech made ‘some proposals that are worth the government’s consideration.’<sup>61</sup>

There can be little doubt that the bitterness of the split was alive and well in Gair’s heart as the 1960 election approached. Gair ‘is a soured renegade whose consuming passion is to do all in his power to wreck the Australian Labor Party’ reported the Labor organ *New Age* on 23 May. On election eve Gair minced no words in attacking his former party, ‘a party unfit and unequipped to govern.’ He appealed to former Labor voters to support him: ‘To the Labor voters who recoil from placing any further trusts in the broken, twisted and red-anted remnants of the once great ALP, the QLP offers a safe political home.’ He did not spare the coalition, purveyors of ‘three years of inept Tory government’ either. ‘If we are to escape the increased hardships of a further three years of sky-rocketing prices, rising unemployment, increasing monopolism, and a tragic absence of developmental works, the people must vote QLP tomorrow.’<sup>62</sup>

Gair’s 1960 election campaign represented a continuation of his attempts to bring the QLP into the central mainstream of politics. His policies were sometimes nebulous, including a promise to ‘emphasise the need to care for the family man’, or, for someone seeking to serve at the state level in Australian politics, over-ambitious, in the case of his promise to restore the purchasing power of the pound. Gair saw the

---

<sup>60</sup> *Townsville daily bulletin* 10 May 1960.

<sup>61</sup> *Courier-Mail* 10 May 1960.

<sup>62</sup> *Courier-Mail* 27 May 1960.

QLP as the answer for those wanting something approximating the centre, between the continuation of the Nicklin-Morris government which ‘will inevitably mean continued increases in prices and rent, and the growth of monopolism, in fact of everything except employment and the workers’ purchasing power’, and the election of a Duggan government which ‘will lead the way to outmoded Socialist ideas and dictation from the Communist clique in the Brisbane Trades Hall.’<sup>63</sup>

Gair had previously claimed that a central party was needed in Australian politics. On 23 June 1959 he claimed, in an address to 100 university students:

*The only thing which can save Australia from going Communist is a political resurgence, inspired and led by the reformist Labor parties, the QLP and the DLP, which have moved into the vacuum created by the ALP when it departed from the middle course and moved to the extreme left – the section which was once the sole domain of the Communist Party.*<sup>64</sup>

Gair attracted good crowds to his meetings, citing the figure of 1700 compared to the crowds of 400 and 900 that Nicklin and Duggan had respectively attracted.<sup>65</sup> He could still pack a house, although as *Courier-Mail* pundit Elgin Reid had pointed out in the 1957 campaign, crowd figures did not mean much.<sup>66</sup>

Somehow the party found fifty-eight candidates. Once again, they had more than enough to cover every electorate in which there was any sort of a chance of victory. Years later, Jay Verney, daughter of a candidate in Rockhampton North recalled how her mother, Maisie, ‘knew Dad would lose, and so did he. It wasn’t about victory, it was about principles.’ The no-nonsense Maisie saw her husband and his political

---

<sup>63</sup> *Courier-Mail* 16 April 1960.

<sup>64</sup> *Standard* 15 July 1959.

<sup>65</sup> *Telegraph* 11 May 1960

<sup>66</sup> *Courier-Mail* 22 June 1957.

associates as ‘big boys playing policy games, drawing strategic maps in the dirt under the house, pledging allegiance to the anti- Communist, Roman Catholic cause.’ Even when luminaries such as Gair and Santamaria visited the home, Maisie made sure they stayed downstairs.<sup>67</sup>

Election day 1960 was a disaster for Gair’s breakaway party. Wright’s naïve dream of what could be achieved with the doubling of the 1957 QLP vote remained just that. QLP representation went down from eleven members to four, and votes decreased to 12.26 percent (23.4 percent in 1957) and in number from 163 534 in 1957 to 90 792. The QLP was not strong anywhere, but polled around thirteen percent in the provincial cities and Brisbane, and nine percent in the country. Three of the seats won, however, were in the country: Cook, Carnarvon and Aubigny. The indestructible Walsh held on in Bundaberg by only sixteen votes.

The main casualty from 1960 was Gair himself. For the first time since 1938, Gair’s hold on his own constituency was in trouble. One publicity brochure spared no effort in promoting his efforts as the member for South Brisbane over the previous twenty-eight years:

*In 28 years as MLA for South Brisbane, Vince Gair has dotted the area – thitherto [sic] the Cinderella of Brisbane – with spacious, lovely new parks, million-pound monuments like the Princess Alexandra Hospital, other social-welfare centres like the Dental Hospital, the Youth Club, the Conservatorium of Music, and countless smaller, but extremely important institutions, where mothers and children, particularly, get care and attention without having to cross the river, as before, to reach them.*

---

<sup>67</sup> Jay Verney, Verney, Jay. ‘Sensual Degrees of Separation’ [Reminiscences of growing up in Rockhampton], *Griffith review* no 6, Summer 2004-2005. J C Verney polled third of three candidates, with 1 667 of the 12 184 valid votes.

*Alderman Bennett has been long enough a municipal representative to be able to show what worthwhile things he had done for his charge. They could be written on the back of the alderman's free tram pass.*<sup>68</sup>

The election leaflet concluded: 'For electors to swap him for Ald. Bennett would be rather like a racing man swapping Tulloch for a bush-picnic horse. He has planned for you, worked for you, built for you!'

But such supplications were of no avail in a seat that was so markedly different from the one he had won ten times previously, usually without much difficulty. Gair won only one of the fourteen booths in his electorate – the Mater Misericordiae Hospital, in which he had taken such an interest in less complicated times. Even the Mater Misericordiae 'victory' was a hollow one, as he did not poll a majority here. He struggled to finish ahead of the Liberal candidate: the final tally was Bennett 5 011, Gair, 3 294 and O'Brien (Liberal) 3 106. The 'bush-picnic horse' was victorious, and 'Tulloch' had to retire – for a while.

If the gathering at 329 Annerley Road was a subdued, if not sombre one, the defeated host was in chirpier spirits than what might have been expected. Early on, when he realised that his cause was lost, Gair puffed on a cigar and was philosophical. 'I am not making any excuses, nor am I whinging. I accept the decision of the people as a true democracy. I half expected to be defeated. It was the electoral boundaries – they made it an impregnable Labor [that is, ALP] seat.' Then, with a characteristic barb at an old foe 'At least I have been beaten only once – and Mr Duggan was beaten twice.'

---

<sup>68</sup> 'The Story of One Man's Work', Gair Papers, Series 7 Box 7 Election Folder 60, National Library of Australia.

(Duggan, presumably at around the same time, was savouring a very easy victory in Toowoomba West.)

At 9 pm he called his forty or so supporters together and said: 'There are greater reasons for our existence today than in 1957. Don't be downhearted – I'm not. I'm only geared to greater efforts. One day the people of this State will look to us for help and guidance in the critical times that will inevitably come to this country.' As ever, Nell Gair was by his side: 'It is a relief to have it all over. I feel the boys and I are getting a husband and father back again.' During the campaign, according to the *Sunday Mail* of 8 May 1960, thirteen year old Paul Gair had intercepted anonymous and obscene phone calls, just some of the ones that Gair's many ill-wishers had bombarded the household at all hours.

At some stage in the evening, Gair had gone to the local television station for an election night interview. He was in the chair being made up for his TV appearance when an old foe, the peppery, bombastic but essentially decent Liberal leader Ken Morris walked in. Moved by the plight of the fallen Gair, Morris leant over and said to him: 'Sorry, old man.'<sup>69</sup> The victorious Premier Frank Nicklin would be similarly compassionate in a kind and courteous handwritten note to Gair a few days later: '[N]o one is more sorry than I am. It is indeed a poor reward for one who not only gave his state a great service, but was prepared to stand up for a great principle – the supremacy of Parliament... you have the very great satisfaction of knowing that you went down with colours flying and were admired by all as a result.'<sup>70</sup> Similar sentiments were recorded by the *Sydney morning herald*, which declared: 'Mr Gair in

---

<sup>69</sup> *Sunday Mail* 29 May 1960

<sup>70</sup> Frank Nicklin to Gair, 2 June 1960. Gair Papers, Series 1 Correspondence Box 1 Folder 15. National Library of Australia.

defeat looms as a more popular figure than he was as a victorious Premier, or fighting QLP leader. He won over political foes – some begrudgingly – by the manner in which he went down.’<sup>71</sup>

The vote for the ALP, in contrast to the QLP’s tally, increased from almost thirty percent to almost forty percent. After 28 May 1960, there was never any doubt as to which Labor party was going to survive in Queensland. Even so, the Clayfield branch of the QLP tried to keep the spirits of the party up, noting in a post-election report that the QLP had polled better than expected, that it was still ‘a strong and decisive political force’ and that the party was still active with all branches ‘enthusiastically organising for future campaigns.’<sup>72</sup> The indefatigable Harold Wright, QLP organiser, exhorted members not to give up. In the 22 June issue of the *Standard* he reminded them that while only 70 000 Queenslanders had voted for the QLP in the Senate in 1958, the vote for the party was between 85 000 and 90 000 in the 1960 state election, where the party had not even contested some seats. While this was an aspect little considered by the other pundits, the sanguine Wright was drawing rather a long bow (not to mention the decline in voting numbers since the election of 1957) when he said: ‘The main lesson to be drawn from the results of the state election held on 28<sup>th</sup> May is that the QLP is here to stay, to grow and to become the government.’<sup>73</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup> *Sydney morning herald* 8 June 1960.

<sup>72</sup> ‘Queensland Labor Party. Clayfield Branch’, roneoed sheet in DLP Papers, OMR-113 John Oxley Library. The author was probably Harry Wright, manager of the *Standard*, who urges readers to subscribe, and who had stood for Clayfield in the recent election.

<sup>73</sup> Voting figures for the QLP in the Senate in 1958 were 73 037. Final voting figures for the QLP in the state election of 1960 were 91 212, down from 163 534 in 1957.



Three of the four QLP survivors represented seats that were the least affected by boundary changes.<sup>74</sup> QLP members, as Tom Truman remarked, depended more on their personal following in their old electorates<sup>75</sup>, and when electoral changes removed their old supporters from them, their prospects were bleak indeed. While most of the QLP had been ministers, only two of the four returned this time had been ministers for a considerable period.

The victory in Aubigny was a personal triumph for former Minister for Public Instruction Les Diplock, whose former seat of Condamine had undergone significant boundary changes. The redistribution removed most of Dalby and its environs, in which he could boast strong support. 'As the Condamine seat is now bounded', Diplock told the *Dalby Herald*, 'it is probably the safest Country Party seat in Queensland ... the only job that seems to have been forgotten is the placing of a 'reserved seat ticket' on the Condamine electorate.'<sup>76</sup> Diplock opted instead to contest Aubigny, which he won.

---

<sup>74</sup> Hughes, *Images and issues*, p 10. Even then the troubles of the QLP were not over. Before the next election, Herbert 'Bunny' Adair (Cook) and Ted Walsh (Bundaberg) had left the party, largely over the discontent engendered by the subsuming of the QLP into the DLP in 1962, and become Independents. Neither had trouble holding their seats until they both retired at the 1969 election. Paul Hilton (Carnarvon) was defeated at the election of 1963, but the durable Diplock lasted as the sole QLP, then DLP representative from 1963 to 1972. Diplock proved to be an excellent local member, with swings between 15 and 20 percent towards him in the 1963 elections in smaller towns and hamlets that had only known him as their local member since 1960. Given that no other QLP/DLP member survived, let alone thrived in Queensland state politics after the election of 1960, and that two of the other three QLP survivors of 1960 lasted out the terms of their natural political lives as Independents, it is suggested that the QLP/DLP label had little to do with Diplock's electoral success, but that his personal ministrations to his electorate did. By April 1962 senior Country Party officials were indicating that Diplock would be accepted if he wanted to join the party, but Diplock insisted that he had not been approached. 'I will contest the next state election as a QLP candidate. I expect to hold the seat. Political tags don't mean a great deal to the people out here. They vote for the man.' (*Courier-Mail* 16 April 1962.) As well as his long association with the district, Diplock was noted for his efforts to combat unemployment through a firm of which he was chairman. (Margaret N Lettice and Claire Skerman Clark, 'The 1963 Queensland State Election', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* November 1963.)

<sup>75</sup> Tom Truman, 'Fraudulent Electoral Systems in Queensland', *Australian Quarterly* December 1959.

<sup>76</sup> *Dalby herald* 4 September 1959.

Once more Walsh held on in Bundaberg, but only just: he would have been pleased with that outcome, particularly if he had unfavourable memories of his fateful electoral rejection in 1947, when times were much better for the party he represented. At the close of counting on election night Walsh was only twenty-six votes ahead of the ALP candidate. ALP headquarters in Brisbane were confident of a win, but it did not materialise.<sup>77</sup>

Herbert 'Bunny' Adair, who had never served as a minister, was returned in the Far North Queensland seat of Cook, despite significant changes to his seat. In Parliament he accused two of his electoral neighbours, Carl Wordsworth (Mulgrave) and Tom Gilmore Sr (Tablelands), both Country Party members, of influencing the outcome of the redistribution. Gilmore kept the farming areas of his electorate, but Mareeba went from Tablelands to Cook, from which Kuranda was excised to go to Mulgrave. But the electorate retained both of its major centres, Mossman and Cooktown.<sup>78</sup> Distance from the capital may have contributed to the independent-mindedness of voters, making them quite happy to return a capable member even if he represented a party that was not particularly popular.<sup>79</sup>

The other seat that remained with the QLP probably stayed that way because of a combination of longevity of representation, and a lack of significant boundary changes. The Carnarvon seat of Paul Hilton was unaltered in that the vital towns of Goondiwindi, Texas and Stanthorpe were retained after the redistribution. Hilton had been the member since 1935, and a minister from 1950 to 1957.

---

<sup>77</sup> Truth, 29 May 1960. The ALP had a well known candidate, Salter, the mayor of Bundaberg.

<sup>78</sup> *Courier-Mail* 10 September 1959; 7 October 1959.

<sup>79</sup> For Adair's easy wins in 1963 and 1966 as an Independent see Hughes, *Images and issues*, pp 154 – 155.

The fallout of the 1960 state election wrought one big change in the conservatives. With the QLP cut back to its small, solid core of voters, the Liberal party believed that those remaining would give eighty-five to ninety percent of their preferences to them, and as early as the day after the election it was put forward that the Liberals would now want to press preferential voting on their Country Party coalition partners.<sup>80</sup>

### 8.7 A NEW CAREER

Gair may have sensed that he would be defeated. In November 1959 he had said on television that he would not be 'too proud' to return to the railways.<sup>81</sup> A few days after Gair's defeat, the possibility of the state government offering Gair a public service job was floated in the press, although the article also noted he might not want it. There were other rumours: Gair would become involved in real estate, subdividing land, or the government would offer Gair the position of chairman of the Sugar Board when the incumbent retired (there was a precedent for this with former Premier William Forgan Smith).<sup>82</sup> But Gair continued in his role as QLP organiser for some months after his defeat, which left him unbowed. He still, after all, had a job to do. 'Members of the Queensland Labor Party are more determined than ever to bring about the reconstruction of the Labor Party. We will fight on until the threat of Communism has been defeated and genuine Labor has been restored to office.'<sup>83</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup> *Sunday Mail* 29 May 1960. At the 1963 state elections, it was reported that QLP voters gave eighty to ninety percent of their preferences to the Country-Liberal coalition, confirming this contention. See *Standard* (Brisbane) 27 June 1963.

<sup>81</sup> 'Gair 'not too proud' to return to railways', *Courier-Mail* 7 November 1959.

<sup>82</sup> *Telegraph* 31 May 1960.

<sup>83</sup> *Standard* 8 June 1960.

On 27 October 1960, Liberal Deputy Premier Ken Morris announced that Gair had been appointed liaison officer in the secondary industries division of the department of labour and industry. Compared to many similar situations later on (including one involving Gair himself), the appointment was hardly a plum one. Gair was expected to relinquish his parliamentary pension of £17/10/- in return for a wage of £50 a week plus expenses. Morris expressed his belief that Gair would be able to give good value to Queensland in his new position because of the many industrialists he had met in his five years as Premier. Premier Frank Nicklin denied that the job was a handout.

In one of the many questions he had to answer over the matter, Morris outlined Gair's role. Hitherto there had not been one officer whose role was to 'contact industrialists in southern states to induce them to visit Queensland, with a view to their establishing [operations] in this state.' Morris and the Director of Secondary Industries had previously shared this work, but the director's chief role was providing technical and other specialised assistance to industries relocating to Queensland, not the liaison work needed to lure them there. Bringing Gair into the picture enabled the director to spend more time on this aspect of his work.<sup>84</sup>

Political considerations apart, natural justice provided a good case for Gair being offered employment. When he first contested a state seat in 1932 Gair had been required to resign from the railways. Unwritten convention declared that people in this situation could, after a subsequent defeat, rejoin the public service at a classification they would have attained had they stayed on. Gair's experience with the department of labour and industry could not be disputed: he had been its minister for

---

<sup>84</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 1 November 1960, p 1097.

six years. In the much later words of Gair's secretary, Denis Strangman, 'The [1960] appointment was, therefore, quite appropriate: it made use of his experience, it did not displace existing public servants, and it honoured the convention of re-employment of MPs forced to resign from the public service.'<sup>85</sup>

Predictably, though, the appointment came in for some criticism. Jack Egerton claimed that Gair would use his new job to organise for the QLP, which the Nicklin-Morris government wanted kept alive because of the potential preference value, even though at this stage preferential voting had not yet been reintroduced. But the president of the Queensland branch of the Federated Clerks Union was pleased that Gair had been given the position: 'As a former Premier who had done great service for the State he deserved some consideration. A former Premier should not have to go begging, cap in hand, for something less than what he was entitled to while in office.' Paul Hilton, QLP leader since the 1960 election debacle said: 'We are coming to a low ebb when, because of the hatred and bias, people object to a man who has served the State so long and well.'<sup>86</sup>

When the dust from the appointment had settled, Gair settled down into an uncharacteristically unheralded existence as a secondary industry liaison officer. Unlike almost all other aspects of his career after 1932, this period of his life was not well covered in the press or elsewhere. At some stage Morris sent Gair to the southern states on a promotional visit. In Duggan's scornful words: '[H]e sent him down south with a little tinpot trade display, and the former Premier was humiliated by having to tell holidaying people who were thinking of coming to this state all about motels and

---

<sup>85</sup> *Australian Financial Review* 28 August 1973.

<sup>86</sup> *Courier-Mail* 28 October 1960; *Telegraph* 28 October 1960; *Courier-Mail* 2 November 1960.

the state of the roads.’<sup>87</sup> Others saw Gair as being less innocuously occupied. Col Bennett, who had unseated Gair in South Brisbane in 1960, claimed that he was lobbying and otherwise trying to influence the Country Liberal government, particularly on the matter of preferential voting:

*This government is being directed by a man in the Department of Labour and Industry in the Treasury Building. It is receiving direction from this public servant on many major issues. Industrialists, and other people interested in bringing industry to Queensland, cannot find him when they go to his office because he is too busy preparing political propaganda for Mr Ken Morris, his erstwhile enemy, for the Liberal Party.*<sup>88</sup>

At least one non-political speech that Gair made during this period, however, was covered. In September 1961 Gair made a luncheon address to the Toowoomba Chamber of Commerce and urged the development of secondary industries to complement robust primary industries already present in Queensland. The concepts were fairly obvious, bordering on the trite. Queensland’s decentralisation was ‘a very desirable state of affairs but from an industrial point of view it had many disadvantages.’ Incentives to secondary industries were justifiable if the project was economically sound. The language was banal, circumlocutory, and hardly vintage Gair:

*If an extensive rural development can be brought about, we can produce a market for the output of manufacturing industries, which in turn provides employment for our increasing population: and this in turn provides a bigger home market for primary products.*<sup>89</sup>

It is more than likely that Gair enjoyed the luncheon, the visit to Toowoomba, and the relative lack of pressure and responsibility. He may have also contemplated his

---

<sup>87</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 23 November 1962, p 1894.

<sup>88</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 23 November 1962, p 1919.

<sup>89</sup> Undated and unidentified newspaper clipping, probably *Toowoomba chronicle*, probably September 1961. Gair Papers, Series 12 Press Cuttings Box 12, Folder 91. National Library of Australia.

eventful past and compared it with his current circumstances. If he wished for more exciting times, he did not have long to wait.

## **8.8 PREFERENCES FOR SALE**

Although after 1960 it would never be doubted which of the Labor parties would survive in Queensland, and Gair was out of Parliament, some still felt that Gair was operating behind the political scenes. In August 1961 Duggan accused his former chief of cooperating with the Nicklin government by not running a QLP candidate in a by election for the Far Western seat of Barcoo. According to Duggan, Gair had arranged for no QLP candidate to run so the coalition could test where votes might drift in their absence.<sup>90</sup> When the feelings of the Country and especially the Liberal coalition partners started to warm towards preferential voting, Gair publicised the QLP's interest in the change, declaring: 'Preference voting gives us something to sell.' He left no doubt as to how the QLP preferences would be distributed: '[P]arty members would be told to give their preferences to Liberal and Country Party candidates.' His old enemy Jack Duggan told Parliament:

*It seems extraordinary that a person in the employ of the government, a former Leader of the QLP, should warn the government, in a public statement, about the need for a change in the method of voting. It is strange that a man in the employ of the government as adviser on the development of secondary industries should take it upon himself to make a statement.'*<sup>91</sup>

When the voting change was decided on early in November, one newspaper revealed, to no one's surprise, but still without naming names, that the government and the QLP

---

<sup>90</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 23 August 1961, p 36. The vote for the ALP increased by 18 percent.

<sup>91</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 28 August 1962, pp 76-77: *Sunday Mail* 29 July 1962.

had kept in close touch while the government was mulling over whether to bring back preferential voting. The report claimed that there was something in it for Gair, who could, in a tight exchange of preferences with the government, oust Bennett in South Brisbane.<sup>92</sup> When the legislation was debated in the Parliament, former ALP speaker John Mann reminded members how Gair had recently said on television: 'Preference voting gives us something to sell.'<sup>93</sup> Col Bennett, who had unseated Gair in South Brisbane two years before, hyperbolically described Gair's alarmingly close relationship with the Liberals:

*There is no doubt about it: it is absolutely and abundantly clear that the Liberal Party has made a pact with the QLP through the agency of the leader of the QLP Vince Gair. I am satisfied that he sits in on the determinations at the meetings of the leading executive members of the Liberal Party in this state. I am sure that he sits in, and that he dictates to them their future policy.*<sup>94</sup>

Meanwhile, the QLP continued to decline in relevance. By late 1961 it was becoming more apparent that the party's decline was both terminal and irreversible. There was no doubt that there was still a section of the electorate that still feared Communism, despite the Communist party's feeble numerical showing in election after election, but the energetic pursuit of Communists in the trade unions, unquestioned in the past, was questioned by a surprising protagonist. Gair's former Attorney General, Bill Power said in an interview with the *Sunday truth*, published on 23 April 1961: 'There's too much talk about Communists in trade unions. People begin to think that any militant trade unionist is a Communist. To my mind the militant unionist is the greatest asset a union or Labor ever had.' By the end of the year, Power would announce that he had

---

<sup>92</sup> *Sunday Truth* 4 November 1962. The suggestion that Gair would recontest South Brisbane if preferential voting was introduced was aired in *News Weekly* on 2 May 1962.

<sup>93</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 23 November 1962, p 1902.

<sup>94</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 23 November 1962, p 1918.



quit the party: simultaneously, another retired Gair Cabinet minister, Tom Foley said he was so inactive in the party that he could be regarded as ‘a dead member.’<sup>95</sup>

Although the switch to preferential voting at least rendered the QLP relevant, Gair still had concerns about the seats that still remained in QLP hands after the debacle of 1960. He admitted at the party conference in late 1962 that under preferential voting Aubigny and Carnarvon would be hard to hold but that the party believed that preferential voting was ‘the only democratic form of elections.’<sup>96</sup>

The QLP knew the importance of its preferences, and exhorted its supporters accordingly. One campaign leaflet, bearing the names of Gair and Jim Judge, QLP secretary, stated, in capital letters: ‘In this election, your vote will be more powerful, more significant than it has ever been before. Your preferences can be as important as your primary vote.’ The leaflet urged supporters, also in capital letters, ‘not to direct preferences in favour of candidates who would support pro- Communist policies in government.’ No one could have been in doubt as to which candidates they meant.<sup>97</sup>

When the time came to allocate preferences, the QLP gave second preferences to the Country-Liberal government in fifty-two of the sixty-one seats it was contesting. In seven cases, the party gave preferences to either Independent or Social Credit candidates, and in Carnarvon and Aubigny, preferences were left open, although in the *Telegraph* of 27 April it had been announced that the ALP would put the sitting QLP members, Paul Hilton and Les Diplock respectively, last to maximise the

---

<sup>95</sup> *Sunday Mail* 3 December 1961.

<sup>96</sup> ‘State General Conference QLP, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> November, 1962’, DLP Papers, John Oxley Library, OMR.113/80.

<sup>97</sup> This item was found in the political ephemera in the John Oxley Library, attached to a brochure for John Dolan, QLP candidate for the metropolitan seat of Clayfield in the 1963 state election.

chances of defeating them. In no case did the QLP give second preference to the ALP and placed the Communist Party candidates last where the party ran candidates.<sup>98</sup> If Premier Frank Nicklin thought the QLP support would make a difference, he did not show it publicly, saying on television that the preference decision would only affect one or two seats.<sup>99</sup>

The 1963 election was another disaster for the QLP. The QLP leader, Paul Hilton, was defeated in Carnarvon, but Les Diplock held on in Aubigny. Diplock's personal following around Dalby was extraordinarily strong, and the key to his political survival. A 1968 analysis described him as 'a past master as a constituency nurse and, as a well-known Anglican a useful symbol in the predominantly Catholic QLP.' He would be the only Gair supporter to successfully contest more than two state elections, and would serve with quiet distinction for another six years. But to all other intents and purposes, as far as state politics were concerned, the QLP was history.<sup>100</sup>

## **8.9 RUNNING FOR THE SENATE, 1961**

No one ever accused Gair of not being pragmatic. At some unspecified point during this period, he must have realized that he would never be able to win a lower house

---

<sup>98</sup> 'QLP to Give Vote to Government', *Courier-Mail* 9 May 1963.

<sup>99</sup> 'Premier on Effect of Preferences', *Courier-Mail* 13 May 1963.

<sup>100</sup> [Cribb, Margaret N B]. 'Politics at State Level – Queensland', *Current Affairs Bulletin* 12 February 1968. In 1963 Diplock said: 'I have been asked over and over again if I was pro-Catholic. I very proudly said 'yes.' If I were asked if I were pro-Church of England I would say 'yes.' If I were asked if I were pro-Lutheran, I would say yes. I would say there is our policy, we are pro-anything which is pro-Christ and we are anti-anything which is anti-Christ.' G E Cook, 'Free From Red Influence', *Courier-Mail* 30 May 1963.

election again.<sup>101</sup> The problem of lower house representation, of course, is a pervading one for minor parties and has remained so to this day.<sup>102</sup>

It was not that winning a Senate seat was an easy option for Gair or his party. In September 1960 secretary Jim Judge wrote to QLP organiser Harry Wright of his belief that on present party form there was not enough support in Queensland to elect a Senator.<sup>103</sup> With a Federal election not due until the next year, it is possible that at that stage no one had thought of Gair for the spot.

When Gair realized that returning to the state politics was not an option, in a Queensland where there was no Upper House, he concentrated his efforts on gaining representation in a wider sphere, and in the Senate. As easily the best known member of his party in Queensland, he was an inevitable choice to head the QLP Senate ticket in 1961. On 6 September, when Jim Judge announced Gair's position on the top of the party ticket, Gair played the Queensland card. Referring to the 'continued discrimination' against Queensland by the Federal government, Gair continued:

*In seeking to protect the interests of Queensland we shall be using the Senate for its original and proper purpose under the Constitution for the smaller and less-developed states against the more populous and wealthy states and against the Commonwealth itself.*<sup>104</sup>

---

<sup>101</sup> In 1968 University of Queensland political scientist Margaret N B Cribb noted that 'the personal popularity of Gair and Byrne [the other DLP Senator] make [the DLP] a far stronger contender in Senate elections than a state vote of barely 6 percent would suggest.' 'Politics at State Level – Queensland', *Current Affairs Bulletin* 12 February 1968.

<sup>102</sup> During its twenty years of existence, the DLP won one lower house seat at state level in New South Wales when the sitting member, a minister, forgot to nominate. The DLP member was defeated at the next election. To the surprise of almost everyone, the virtually extinct party won a seat in the Legislative Council in Victoria in December 2006. The Greens won a House of Representatives seat in 2001 when the Liberal party declined to contest a hitherto safe Labor seat and the Labor party was temporarily unpopular because of the precipitous resignation of its sitting member. The Green member was defeated at the federal election of 2004. Despite running very close on two occasions with well known candidates (Janine Haines, former Senator, in Kingston and John Schumann, a musician known both as a soloist and as lead singer of the folk group Redgum, in Mayo, both in South Australia), the Australian Democrats never won a lower house seat.

<sup>103</sup> Jim Judge to Harold Wright, 8 September 1960. DLP Papers, OMR 113, John Oxley Library.

<sup>104</sup> *Courier-Mail* 7 September 1961.

The QLP organ, the *Standard*, rejoiced in its choice of candidate: 'It is Queensland's good fortune that here at least is the man who will fight for this State as no other man has fought for it.'<sup>105</sup> Nearing the end of his first statewide tour, QLP organiser Harry Wright reported 'there is every reason to believe that Vince Gair will bolt in.'<sup>106</sup>

Although there was a wide range of viewpoints regarding association, affiliation or amalgamation with the DLP, the two parties came together for the 1961 election. Gair was already on record regarding the common ground the parties shared, claiming that the DLP, like the QLP, was 'a truly Australian, Christian Democratic Party with a sound and progressive policy and implacably opposed to Communism and Fascism.' An unabashed supporter of links between the two, Gair believed that 'It was imperative for the QLP to have some association with an Australia wide party with aims and aspirations, similar to its own, and with which it could work federally for the implementation of a sound progressive policy for Australia's good.'<sup>107</sup>

As the only Senator representing the DLP in the Federal Parliament, Tasmanian George Cole gave a policy speech on behalf of both parties in Melbourne on 8 November. In the speech document, headed 'Joint DLP-QLP Policy Speech', Cole said:

*We have now been joined in the closest ties and in common policy by the Queensland Labor Party, led by the distinguished former Premier of Queensland, Vince Gair, happily with us on the platform tonight – and soon to be with us in Canberra.*

---

<sup>105</sup> 'Gair for the Senate', *Standard* 22 September 1961.

<sup>106</sup> 'Smoke Signals from the North', *Standard* 22 September 1959.

<sup>107</sup> *Standard* 2 June 1961.

*Accordingly, wherever I use the term DLP, you will understand that I am also referring to the QLP.*<sup>108</sup>

Five days later, Gair gave the Queensland Labor Party policy speech at Brisbane's City Hall. The speech itself bore the imprimatur 'in association with the Democratic Labor Party', once more attesting, on an important QLP document, to the closeness of the relationship. It is worth outlining the policies at length. Press coverage of QLP/DLP policies, when present, largely concentrated on their strident anti-Communism and its role in industrial, defence and foreign policies, but the document ranged far more widely than that and even had a few innovations.

Gair termed the occasion 'a historic night' and declared how the two parties, 'having a common point of view and dedicated to ideas fundamentally important to the personal, local, national and international life of our people' were 'in close political association.' Once more the QLP/DLP was presented as the party that would 'restore the Labor Movement to its former prestige and glory.' (Underlining in original.) As usual, some of the policies were vague and very short on specifics. Noting that 'All modern economies must expand to maintain an increasingly high standard of living' Gair added 'This we will ensure', but did not say how this would happen except to inform the audience, without further elaboration, that greater opportunities would be given by the extension of credit to primary and secondary industries. Gair, or whoever wrote the speech, worthily noted that 'all policies of an economic and financial character must be used to obtain, and then maintain, full employment', which was necessary 'in justice to our community.'

---

<sup>108</sup> Democratic Labor Party, 'Joint DLP-QLP Policy Speech: Delivered by Senator G R Cole, Parliamentary Leader of the Australian Democratic Labor Party ... on the Occasion of the 1961 Federal Election', [1961]. Held John Oxley Library.

The candidate was more specific in terms of taxation, proposing income tax deductions for 'reasonable' boarding school fees, and the abolition of payroll tax. Gair proposed the reintroduction of national service training, an increase in child endowment (with other social service payments being fixed by a tribunal) and assistance to parents with children attending private schools. Low-interest long-term loans to industries moving to rural areas would facilitate decentralization. An expanded migration program was also necessary, with Gair declaring optimistically, if clumsily and ungrammatically, that:

*This nation would be amazed at the great strength that would emerge in all quarters of national life, if we had a population of twenty million people, and how our nation would assume a new and much more important and recognized position in world affairs.*

Gair paid some attention to union affairs, stating that the QLP would strengthen the existing clean ballots legislation, but not saying how. He wore his heart on his sleeve with a reference to 'the completely justifiable resentment' by trade unionists against compulsory political levies and affiliation fees. He also stated that the workers should share in productivity increases and it was on this basis that wages should be fixed, and warned the ALP of the dangers inherent in liaising with Communists on unity tickets and other matters.

Defence would always be a priority in QLP/DLP thinking, and Gair argued that the spending on defence was too low. The federal government had set aside £200 million, approximately 3.5 percent of gross national product, for the purpose: Gair pointed out that this was half the proportion allocated by Great Britain and a third of that allocated by the United States.

*We must be realists on this question of defence.*

*It is completely useless to talk in terms of social security, of high standards of living, and national development, unless we are at all times properly equipped to protect these very things against those who would rob us of them.*

He played a familiar and perennial tune when he cited examples of how poorly Queensland had fared in the disbursement of funds: ‘This cataract of money has poured over the rest of Australia ... comparatively speaking, what Queensland has received would scarcely fill a water jug.’ Gair’s tactic at this juncture was a familiar one, combining a significant omission with hyperbole. Giving examples of some significant development projects in the other states he did not specify how much money Queensland had received in the same period, and warned of ‘a ghastly future for Queensland’. He also said that Senator George Cole, then the sole DLP member in the federal parliament, would use his power and influence to make sure that Queensland shared fairly and justly in the disbursement, surely a naively confident claim to make on behalf of Cole, a Tasmanian.

Some of the policy proposals were novel for the time. Foreseeing the implications of the Common Market and its potential ‘grave effect’ on trade, Gair proposed the establishment of commissions to recommend new types of rural production and a special fund to assist primary production re-orientation and stabilization. He also noted the great potential for markets in Asia and declared that if markets could be secured there, the adjustments that would be necessary after the Common Market was completely underway would be a lot less painful. He called for the retaining of

industry in Australian hands, 'with justice and equity to friends from overseas' who wished to invest in it.<sup>109</sup>

Gair played a more familiar tune as the campaign drew to a close, choosing to use the purported neglect of the federal government as the subject of his final appeal to the readers of the *Standard*:

*The states on the perimeter ... of which Queensland is the prime example, are suffering a neglect which would only be conceivable if we were a separate country altogether ... I charge the representatives in the Federal Parliament of the Liberal and Country Parties with a complete neglect of their duty towards this State.*<sup>110</sup>

Despite a policy speech that was not devoid of novel or meritorious features, Gair was not successful. The Queensland Labor Party polled 11.75 percent. It was little remarked on at the time, but the result was an improvement on the 1958 result for the Senate in Queensland, where the party had polled 10.56 percent. The result would certainly have encouraged Gair, as it showed the value of his name and reputation even when it was linked to a party that was undoubtedly in decline and for which almost all of the news since 1958 had been bad.

Gair had finished sixth in a contest to find five Senators. Some time afterwards, the *News Weekly* would claim that the last Liberal elected received the two percent benefit of the donkey vote.<sup>111</sup> It was his second political defeat in a row. He would never suffer another.

---

<sup>109</sup> 'Policy Speech of the Queensland Labor Party (In Association with the Democratic Labor Party)', typescript, Gair Papers Series 7 Box 7 Elections Folder 60, National Library of Australia.

<sup>110</sup> *Standard* 1 December 1961.

<sup>111</sup> *News Weekly* 16 April 1964.



## 8.10 MERGING WITH THE DLP

The commonality between the QLP and the DLP were evident from the first. Their origins were similar and their aims were congruent. In July 1958 the *Courier-Mail* reported that the QLP would have an almost identical policy on national issues with the DLP, but would fight the upcoming federal election as a Queensland party and stress local development issues.<sup>112</sup> By February 1959 it was reported that the metropolitan rank and file QLP members ‘distinctly favoured’ amalgamation with the DLP, but that any decision would be left to the annual conference.<sup>113</sup> Later that month, the QLP central council decided to circularize its branches to gauge the party mood on the issue.<sup>114</sup>

Despite this, there was resistance for some time to a merger between the two. For those who advocated a merger, the 1959 QLP conference at Rockhampton was a blow to their hopes. A motion that central council be empowered to liaise with the DLP ‘to further the fight against Communism and monopoly capitalism’ was defeated.<sup>115</sup> Gair, Walsh and Condon Byrne spoke on a possible liaison, with Walsh and Byrne understood to have told conference that hopes for a reunited Labor party lay in Queensland and that liaison with the DLP would endanger this.<sup>116</sup> In August 1960 Santamaria said on television that he did not think there was ‘the slightest prospect’ of

---

<sup>112</sup> ‘DLP National Line for QLP’, *Courier-Mail* 10 July 1958.

<sup>113</sup> *Sunday Truth* 8 February 1959.

<sup>114</sup> *Telegraph* 23 and 25 February 1959.

<sup>115</sup> *Sunday Truth* 15 November 1959.

<sup>116</sup> *Sunday Mail* 15 November 1959. The minutes of the meeting show that, after Walsh spoke against admitting the press, reporters were excluded from the conference. They also record that Walsh and Byrne opposed variously worded motions advocating association with the DLP, but, frustratingly, although Gair addressed conference on the question, his words are not reported and there is no way of telling how he might have felt at this time. See ‘[Queensland Labor Party] Report of the Second General Conference of the Queensland Labor Party Held at Rockhampton on 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> November 1959’, DLP Papers. OMR 113/75. John Oxley Library.

a union between the QLP and the DLP. He denied that had approached Gair with the suggestion of a merger. 'Mr Gair has been a personal friend of mine, and I have no intention of embarrassing him in any way.' Santamaria also reminded the TV interviewer that while he completely supported the DLP, he was not entitled to speak for it. He also said that there was no significance in the fact that Brian Mullins, Gair's former secretary, was state president of the National Civic Council.<sup>117</sup>

A significant number of QLP parliamentary representatives were less than enthused over the idea of a merger. Late in 1959, Walsh, Power, McCathie and Jones asserted that they would quit the party if it combined with the DLP.<sup>118</sup> By the end of 1960, Walsh was the only one of this quartet still in Parliament, but Power said in April 1961 that if the QLP merged with the DLP, 'the QLP won't see me again. I'll get out so fast they won't see me go.'<sup>119</sup> The QLP's poor showing that year presumably weakened at least some objections to a merger, given that it was increasingly apparent that the party's longterm survival could now be called into question. In September, QLP state secretary Jim Judge wrote to organiser Harry Wright: 'I still say that unless there is a dramatic improvement in organisation, the QLP vote will not improve appreciably.'<sup>120</sup>

While a formal merger was yet to take place, the links between the two breakaway Labor parties did have some benefits for them. Frank McManus, voted out of the Senate in 1958 but still working for the DLP cause, told a meeting of QLP delegates that the link between the two had contributed to the increase in the DLP-QLP Senate

---

<sup>117</sup> ' "No Prospect" of Union of Two Breakaway Labor Movements', *Courier-Mail* 22 August 1960.

<sup>118</sup> *Sunday Mail* 13 December 1959.

<sup>119</sup> Bill Power, 'For Labor – Unity at all Costs!', *SundayTruth* 23 April 1961.

<sup>120</sup> Jim Judge to Harold Wright, 8 September 1960. DLP Papers, OMR 113. John Oxley Library.

vote from 385 000 in 1958 to 472 000 in 1961. According to McManus, rank and file support for a merger was strong.<sup>121</sup>

Negotiations between the QLP and DLP took place at various times throughout 1961. DLP Federal President Bob Joshua made a private trip to Brisbane in early 1961 to discuss the position. The matter was further discussed in Melbourne in August and Sydney in September, after the QLP announcement of 13 July that it would fight the 1961 elections on a common front with the DLP.<sup>122</sup> Cooperation in the state arena was mooted as well. In May 1962, Santamaria said that the National Civic Council would give the QLP 'the same full support' in the 1963 state election as it had the DLP in other states.<sup>123</sup>

Merger talk brought an end to one long and very important political association for Gair, that of Ted Walsh. McManus cited Walsh as 'a major obstacle' to the QLP's formal association with the DLP.<sup>124</sup> Gair and Walsh had been associated so closely and for so long that one newspaper profile had, years before described Walsh as Gair's 'fidus Achates.'<sup>125</sup> In August 1960 a discontented Walsh resigned from the QLP executive, on which he served as Vice-President.<sup>126</sup>

On 6 June 1962, in a surprise statement in Parliament, Ted Walsh said that he no longer considered himself a member of the QLP. Sixteen days later, Herbert 'Bunny'

---

<sup>121</sup> 'DLP-QLP Link Discussed', *News Weekly* 4 July 1962.

<sup>122</sup> 'The DLP: The Unchartered [sic] Area', unpublished typescript, Frank McManus papers, Box 3, National Library of Australia.

<sup>123</sup> *News Weekly* 9 May 1962.

<sup>124</sup> 'The DLP: The Unchartered [sic] Area', unpublished typescript, Frank McManus papers, Box 3, National Library of Australia.

<sup>125</sup> *Sunday Truth* 17 January 1954. Achates was the bosom companion of Aeneas, hero of Virgil's account of the founding of Rome, *The Aeneid*. 'Fidus Achates' means, literally, faithful Achates.

<sup>126</sup> 'Minutes of Meeting of Queensland Labor Party, Central Council, Held at Headquarters on Wednesday, 24<sup>th</sup> August, 1960.', DLP Papers, OMR 113. John Oxley Library.

Adair, member for Cook, announced that he would contest his seat as an independent. He told a journalist: 'I object to any liaison between the QLP and the Democratic Labor Party.' When told of Adair's decision, Gair said: 'This is a surprise. Mr Adair has not resigned officially.'<sup>127</sup> There was a silver lining for the QLP in the departure of these two figures. Gair remarked shortly afterwards that their leaving had cleared the way for future DLP-QLP cooperation.<sup>128</sup>

Late in 1962 the QLP convention decided to form a full Federal association with the DLP. The decision was reportedly unanimous. Gair emphasised that the DLP was a Federal association of autonomous state bodies and therefore the QLP would not lose its identity, but would benefit by cooperation with the Australia wide party. It was envisaged that the QLP would use the name DLP in Federal elections but continue with the Queensland Labor Party appellation at state ones.<sup>129</sup>

McManus said in March 1963 'the DLP has never attempted to intrude into Queensland. I have found no hostility towards the links between the DLP and QLP.' As for Gair, McManus was ambivalent about the prospect of working with him in the future:

*I could not presume to advise Mr V C Gair whether he should contest the State election or a Senate seat at the next Federal election. I am going to try and get back into the Federal Parliament and if I get back I would hope we would have Mr Gair with us.*

---

<sup>127</sup> 'Adair Quits QLP, Will Stand Again', *Courier-Mail* 23 June 1962.

<sup>128</sup> 'DLP-QLP Link Discussed', *News Weekly* 4 July 1962.

<sup>129</sup> *News Weekly* 7 November 1962. McManus is mistaken on two counts when he states that 'It is hard to pinpoint the date of the formal link up between the QLP and DLP, but it most likely occurred in the first half of 1962.' ('The DLP: The Unchartered [sic] Area', unpublished typescript, Frank McManus papers, Box 3, National Library of Australia.

McManus noted also ‘The DLP has not propped up the QLP financially.’<sup>130</sup>

Late in the piece, the *Sunday Truth* pondered the question of whether the QLP still existed or whether it had been totally swallowed into the DLP. The newspaper pointed out that the party had not had a conference for nearly three years, the fact that it did not contest the Brisbane City Council elections, and the doubts as to whether it still had a representative in Parliament, Diplock apparently preferring to use the DLP tag by now. Gair phoned the paper and, in the journalist’s words, ‘made it very clear that his QLP was very much alive and kicking wherever it felt a kick was needed most.’ He told the journalist that the party now held triennial conventions, and that one was scheduled for May 1965, and that the party was not interested in municipal elections. ‘We see our role now in the bigger field of state and federal politics and in larger issues such as foreign affairs, and defence and fighting for the preservation of our democracy.’ Gair clarified the party’s relationship with the DLP. ‘We are the Queensland branch of the Democratic Labor Party, and there will be nothing new if I stand as a DLP candidate at the coming Senate election. I stood as a DLP candidate in 1961.’<sup>131</sup>

There was no fanfare for the end of the QLP name. Its supporters simply stopped using it, sometime around the latter half of 1964. With Gair elected as a Senator under the DLP banner on 5 December that year, there seemed to be no good reason to use a

---

<sup>130</sup> *Courier-Mail* 11 March 1963.

<sup>131</sup> *SundayTruth* 20 and 27 September 1964. On 6 May 1964 the executive and central council of the party had formally decided to contest the forthcoming by-election for the state seat of Yeronga under the name DLP. (‘Minutes of Meeting, Executive and Central Council QLP/DLP at Headquarters ...May 6<sup>th</sup> 1964’, OMR 113, DLP Papers, John Oxley Library.) During the course of research for this thesis, I did not find any document emanating from party headquarters using the QLP name and dated after 1964.

different appellation for him or party followers in state elections. A generation later, and beyond, the political party led by people with names like Wayne Goss and Peter Beattie would often be called the Queensland Labor Party in the press and elsewhere without attracting confusion, or even comment.

### **8.11 RUNNING FOR THE SENATE, 1964**

Though he had suffered two election defeats in a row, it was clear that Gair was not going to go away. When Senator Max Poulter, elected at the 1961 election, in September 1962 the *News Weekly* noted, naively, that ‘in a true preferential system’ the seat would go to Gair.<sup>132</sup> Predictably, the *Standard* took up the call, and listed the reasons why Gair should receive the nomination instead of an ALP member:

*A true Labor man: 5 years Premier of the State: supporter of Parliamentary Democracies: opposition to Unity Tickets: greatest number of votes of unselected Senate nominees.*<sup>133</sup>

In some ways, Gair’s organisational activities with the QLP had more than a trace of self-interest. By keeping the party organisation functioning, two political scientists theorised, he was able to position himself for a re-entry into politics, either federal or state, ‘should the right opportunity present itself.’ And despite their dire electoral results, there was little doubt that some aspects of QLP organisation were being competently attended to: at the 1963 state election, the party contested sixty-one seats, only one less than the heady early days of 1957.<sup>134</sup>

---

<sup>132</sup> *News Weekly* 12 September 1962.

<sup>133</sup> ‘That Senate Vacancy’, *Standard* 12 October 1962.

<sup>134</sup> Margaret N Lettice and Claire Skerman Clark, ‘The 1963 Queensland State Election’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History* November 1963.

In February 1964 the party announced its decision not to contest the municipal elections for that year. The reason given was the need to conserve its resources for the more important Senate election.<sup>135</sup>

When Gair ran for the Senate in the half Senate election of 5 December 1964 it was clear that things had changed since he was a member of the Labor party and bound with rigid discipline. He said that the Senate should not be a party house with members gagged by party discipline, but instead Senators should be able to speak freely on behalf of the state they represented, and that they should speak from knowledge.<sup>136</sup> At the time, the Senate had lifted their salaries and there was resentment over parliamentary salary rises. The discontent with the established parties over the role in the ‘conspiracy’ to lift parliamentary salaries may well have paved the way for Gair to win in Queensland.<sup>137</sup>

## **8.12 BACK INTO PARLIAMENT**

The DLP Senate ticket that Gair headed tallied 11.97 percent of the vote, up from the 6.52 percent the QLP had managed in the 1963 election, and from the 11.75 percent the party had tallied in 1961 when Gair had also headed the ticket. He declared that he would work in the interests of all Queenslanders. He also foresaw that he, on behalf of his party, would have, ‘the responsibility of exercising a decisive vote on crucial matters.’<sup>138</sup> Placed in the first position on the ballot, Gair had benefited from the

---

<sup>135</sup> ‘QLP Saves Efforts For Senate’, *News Weekly* 20 February 1964.

<sup>136</sup> *News Weekly* 5 November 1964.

<sup>137</sup> *Telegraph* 13 November 1964; *Sun Herald* 20 December 1964.

<sup>138</sup> ‘Special Statement for the Sunday Mail’, unpublished and undated typescript. Gair Papers, Series 7 Box 7 Elections Folder 60, National Library of Australia.

‘donkey vote’ but the increase in DLP support in Queensland was a remarkable one. Although minor parties generally do better in Senate elections, where there is actually a chance of a candidate winning, Gair’s feat in almost doubling Queensland’s 1963 House of Representatives percentage for the DLP was impressive, especially as there had only been modest improvements in the vote in New South Wales and Victoria.

Even so, it was a near run thing, and the *News Weekly* of 10 December, five days after the election, did not know whether Gair would win, but cheerfully noted that whatever the result the DLP had been the determining factor in keeping the ALP out of office. The *Australian* carried a startling headline on 9 December, ‘Gair may make it on Red preferences.’ The headline could have been better chosen. Gair, of course, was last on the Communist ticket, but their preferences went to the third ALP candidate, thus eliminating the second Liberal candidate, whose preferences were distributed to Gair, ensuring his victory.

Political considerations aside, Gair would have had good reason to consider himself fortunate in winning his Senate seat. The *Sunday Truth* facetiously nominated him for the title of Luckiest Man of 1964. The newspaper noted that if he wished, he could ‘sit back and face the future with a contented, happy smile.’ An extremely unlikely scenario was depicted by way of illustrating the point. ‘For he has a gold-plated future even if he doesn’t open his mouth in the Senate for his six year term.’<sup>139</sup> More realistically, the paper had already commented on the possibility that he would be the only DLP Senator in Canberra, making his life a lonely one. ‘And there can be nothing much lonelier than being the odd man out in the tight Canberra club of parliamentarians.’ The *Sunday Truth* postulated that no ALP person would want to be

---

<sup>139</sup> *Sunday Truth* 27 December 1964.



seen fraternizing with Gair in Canberra, and that the Liberals would accord him a frosty reception if he happened to beat a Liberal for the final place. Nothing in Gair's personality suggests that the prospect of being 'sent to Coventry' by his fellow parliamentarians would have disrupted his personal equanimity. Nor were allowances made for Gair's gregarious and convivial nature, and the potential levelling effect of the parliamentary bar scene. But the report concluded that 'if Mr Gair gets to Canberra he is certain to find the atmosphere very cool ... very frigid. He will need all his recognized fighting qualities to weather the cold war he will encounter.'<sup>140</sup>

The 1964 Senate election had seen the defeat of George Cole of Tasmania, sole DLP member in the Federal Parliament. While Cole was a hard worker, the *Canberra Times* of 8 December acknowledged that he was 'not the happiest choice' for that position, which was now vacant. When Gair and McManus met to decide who would be leader of the Democratic Labor Party in the Senate it was decided to draw the name of the leader from out of a hat. Gair won, thus ensuring that the next chapter in this thesis would be a long one. The *Courier-Mail* journalist Wallace Brown saw it as 'probably the best thing that could have happened to the DLP.' Brown made an astute assessment of the strengths of each man to back up his judgment. 'The ebullient, experienced, self-confident Mr Gair should make an able front man. And behind him will be the clever Mr McManus, whose ability as Federal organizing secretary had been proven in Victoria, especially, where the DLP is strong.'<sup>141</sup> Brown's judgement, particularly that on Gair, would be proved correct although few could have foreseen the ways in which he would influence the course of Australian politics in the next eight and a half years.

---

<sup>140</sup> *Sunday Truth* 13 December 1964.

<sup>141</sup> *Courier-Mail* 26 June 1965.

## CHAPTER NINE: GAIR THE SENATOR, 1965 – 1974.

‘You’d have to be insane to vote DLP. You’d have to be a fascist, hate-mongering, racist, pope-loving, puritanical, life-hating, moralist, hung-up, authoritarian prick, mentally retarded and insane to boot before you could vote DLP.’<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> David Williamson, *Don’s party*, Sydney: Currency Press, p 52.

## 9.1 INTRODUCTION

As is often the case with many successful state-level Australian politicians, there were rumours that Gair would one day enter Federal politics.<sup>2</sup> However, as a prominent minister, and then premier of a party whose hold on power seemed impregnable, there was little reason for him to make the change to Federal Parliament, particularly after Labor's loss at that level in 1949. Even further away from his mind was any thought of entering the Senate. Gair as premier had little time for the bicameral system, and less for the upper level in that system, going so far as to declare in 1952 that 'one day the people of Australia will recognise the Senate is not essential to proper government.'<sup>3</sup>

Eight years later, the political landscape had changed forever and Gair was out of state Parliament. But only a few days after his defeat in South Brisbane, Canberra and Brisbane were 'twittering with speculation' that Gair would lead a Senate team.<sup>4</sup>

Successful at his second attempt, Gair entered the Senate on 1 July 1965 after winning the first of two six year terms. He left it under controversial circumstances, and three years early, in 1974. For almost all of the nine years that Gair was in the Senate, he was leader of the Democratic Labor Party, which started out with two members but finished up with five, and, after 1968, holding the balance of power.

During his period in the Senate, Gair spoke on many major issues, foreign and domestic. While he continued to be a major thorn in the side of the Australian Labor

---

<sup>2</sup> *Telegraph* 19 May 1952; *Sunday Mail* 1 February 1953.

<sup>3</sup> *Worker* 17 November 1952.

<sup>4</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald* 8 June 1960.

Party, they did not receive all of his barbs, particularly in the latter period. As a Senator, Gair showed fiery political courage, but coupled it with a blinkered outlook, and a lack of flexibility and vision that greatly impaired his effectiveness, and left him, once more, in the long term a relatively minor figure in terms of real achievements. Although the political arena was wider, Gair wielded no executive power, but power by default. At times he even seemed to joke about his situation in relation to the glories of past years.<sup>5</sup>

Gair's history at this time was, naturally enough, a mirror of the history of the Democratic Labor Party. Few political historians think of the DLP in terms other than that of extremism, particularly in the issues of defence and foreign policy, but the DLP also contributed some policy ideas that were later adopted without wide acknowledgement by the other parties for the benefit of Australia. Gair's apparent willingness to continue to run with defence and foreign policy issues centred around the internal and external threat of Communism rather than concentrate more on more innovative, if less spectacular ideas, cost the party the priceless asset of relevance as time went on, and does nothing to contradict the central theme of this thesis: that Gair's outlook was a blinkered one lacking in imagination.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> CPD Senate 23 February 1967, p 100. The occasion was the winning of the last spot on the Senate's Library Committee: Gair said that he was 'flushed with victory.'

<sup>6</sup> Gair was not alone in this among DLP Senators. The year after he retired from the Senate, Condon Byrne noted that the DLP had made a valuable contribution in Parliament by 'the presentation of positive political ideals and programs, many of which were rejected at the time but subsequently adopted and always without acknowledgment of their origin.' He continued to reminisce 'The DLP would present its own policies, which have always been progressive and in so many cases well in advance of the political thought of other parties.' Unfortunately, Byrne did not think to specify what the DLP's innovative ideas were. *Queensland Calling*, October 1975. The title was the monthly journal of the 'Save our State' (SOS) Campaign.

## 9.2 FIRST DAYS IN THE SENATE

Although Gair was elected in December 1964, and officially became a Senator on 1 July 1965, he did not make his first speech in the Senate until the evening of 23 August 1965. His federal debut lasted thirteen minutes. Gair was commenting on an ephemeral issue, a dispute between a newly established air freight company, Ipec-Air Pty Ltd, and the department of civil aviation. Gair opened his Senatorial speaking career at 8:47 pm, saying:

*It is not my intention to deal with the merits of the claim of Ipec-Air Pty Ltd, nor is it my intention to deal with the history of that company's relations with the Department of Civil Aviation.*

As ever, however, he preferred to view himself as a protagonist on behalf of the underdog, and added a measure of hyperbole to his statements:

*I readily saw a very grave injustice being perpetrated by the National government of Australia upon a company, a new young company, which sought to enter into competition with existing companies in the business of air freight. That, I believe, is revolting to the average man.*

On that occasion, the Labor Opposition were in sympathy with his statements, and leader of the Opposition in the Senate, Lionel Murphy congratulated the old warrior, though with qualified sentiments:

*I fear that in the future we might not agree with him altogether. We feel, however, that tonight he started well. The honourable senator began on firm ground.*<sup>7</sup>

Gair certainly had begun on firm ground, with his vote helping to defeat the government and its attempts to stop Ipec from going through with a legal case, on the importation of planes. But there was another part to the story – Gair's first speech,

---

<sup>7</sup> CPD Senate 23 August 1965, pp 106-107.

originally intended to have the theme of northern development, was copied and handed out to members of the press. It remained undelivered, but the *Courier-Mail* headlined it the next morning anyway.<sup>8</sup>

### **9.3 GAIR AND FOREIGN POLICY AND DEFENCE**

As a party, the DLP was, as Paul Reynolds has noted, particularly interested in foreign policy and defence. When considering the DLP, it is impossible to separate the two concerns, given that the main thrust of DLP foreign policy was the containment of threats from Communist countries, partly by maintaining and making alliances with the United States and non- Communist Asia, and partly by the building up of defence capabilities. Gair declared in the Senate that ‘defence cannot be considered apart from foreign policy.’<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the DLP often held that a wealthy and developed nation was better equipped to defend itself. On 9 May 1968 Gair told the Senate that ‘the development of our natural resources and of the country itself are contingent on adequate defence ... It would be utter foolishness on our part if our national defence and our national development were not very closely related.’

The DLP frequently crossed swords with the coalition government on defence. The coalition government preferred to rely on security from the alliances that they had rather than to aim for a self-reliance in defence that would not be attainable for years. Gair thought differently: ‘We believe we should be sufficiently independent to be able, in the event of an invasion, to defend this country until some ally comes to our

---

<sup>8</sup> ‘Silent Campaigner – Vincent Gair’s Third Party Line’, *Nation* 16 April 1966.

<sup>9</sup> *CPD* Senate 1 September 1965 p 280.

aid.’<sup>10</sup> On 6 October 1971 he declaimed somewhat melodramatically in the Senate: ‘We would betray the interests of the younger generations, and even the generations yet to be born, if this great country – the land of the Southern Cross – was left as a gift to be overrun by the hooves of invaders’ horses.’

In a major speech in the Senate on 1 September 1965, Gair outlined the ‘basic defence policy for which the DLP stands,’ claiming that the policy would serve whether the allies stayed in Southeast Asia or not. Gair called for the rapid buildup of an army of three divisions, and for compulsory military training and national service. He disagreed with the Menzies government’s propositions for reductions in the navy and air force, and wanted the Australian government to make it clear to its allies that troops would remain in Malaysia, Vietnam and other parts of Southeast Asia considered vital to security. Australia needed to develop its own nuclear deterrent<sup>11</sup> ‘in view of China’s new nuclear power, of Indonesia’s new rockets which can be used to develop a nuclear threat against Australian cities and of the recurring danger that our allies might leave Southeast Asia.’ There was a need for a high level of munitions production in Australia, an industry in which, of course, Communists would be prohibited from engaging. A strong defence program would be used to strengthen Australia’s hand in the building of ‘a military, political and economic alliance in the Pacific based on India, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and any other Asian power willing to join with us to create a balance of power to contain Communist China.’

In the late 1960s Gair worried at a change in government attitude towards defence policy. He believed that the coalition government was ‘submitting to a pressure that

---

<sup>10</sup> *CPD* Senate 1 March 1967, p 214.

<sup>11</sup> On 9 May 1968 in the Senate, Gair claimed that Australia spent \$9 million a year on defence compared to Canada’s \$300 million.

more should be expended upon national development than in the field of defence. I am not one who believes that national development is not important to the future of our country; but I recognise that the development of our natural resources and the country itself are contingent upon adequate defence.’<sup>12</sup> While the DLP was generally seen as hawkish on defence, Gair preferred to see himself as ‘a realistic pacifist – one who believes that the best way to save Australia from war is by preparation and defence.’<sup>13</sup> He was also realistic in acknowledging that Australia could not defend itself by relying on its own resources: ‘[W]e realise that with a population of 11.5 million we cannot be entirely self sufficient. But we believe that we should be significantly independent to be able, in the event of an attempted invasion, to defend the country until some country comes to our aid.’<sup>14</sup>

The foreign policy line followed by the DLP was mainly concerned with the two Communist superpowers, Soviet Russia and China, particularly the latter, and South East Asia, with the obvious emphasis on Vietnam and the war. Although Gair’s foreign policy line followed closely that of the United States he at least played lip service to the notion that Australia was an important and mature player in the region and in the world. ‘We have grown up now. Australia is no longer a babe in world affairs.’<sup>15</sup>

Although not in government, Gair was able to exert pressure on the coalition in matters of defence and foreign policy, and the outstanding example of this came with

---

<sup>12</sup> *CPD* Senate 9 May 1968, p 921.

<sup>13</sup> *CPD* Senate 9 May 1968 p 922.

<sup>14</sup> *CPD* Senate 1 March 1967, p 213.

<sup>15</sup> *CPD* Senate 27 April 1966 p 613.



the matter of the heightened Russian interest in the Indian Ocean after the British announced their withdrawal from the region.

In August 1969 Gordon Freeth, lately appointed minister for external affairs, made a speech, apparently with the approval of Prime Minister Gorton, indicating that the government was not necessarily alarmed or concerned about the Russian naval presence in the Indian Ocean. Freeth said: 'Australia has to be watchful, but need not panic whenever a Russian appears. It has to avoid both facile gullibility and automatic rejection of opportunities for co-operation.'<sup>16</sup> Freeth's speech was, according to Santamaria, a direct contradiction of a public warning from Defence Minister Fairhall on 7 July against the expansion of Soviet military and naval power in the Indian Ocean.<sup>17</sup> Freeth had not discussed his speech with any other Cabinet members beforehand. Liberal minister and diarist Peter Howson saw it as 'illustrat[ing] the difficulties today of achieving a coherent policy that we've always found to be part and parcel of Liberal Party responsible government.'<sup>18</sup>

Years later in an unpublished interview Freeth gave some background on the innocuous origins of his speech. Freeth had the view that Australians were getting 'a bit panicky and making large demands on defence votes and all kinds of things' and that the Russian presence in the Indian Ocean was only part of their general presence on the high seas, where they were entitled to be. In any case, the Russians were 'more concerned with Northern Africa, the Middle East and the northern part of the Indian Ocean.' Freeth mistakenly believed that he would be able to 'make sure Australians

---

<sup>16</sup> CPD House of Representatives 14 August 1969, quoted in Andrew Farran, 'The Freeth Experiment', *Australian Outlook* vol 26 1972.

<sup>17</sup> B A Santamaria, *Against the tide*, p 315.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Howson, *The Howson diaries: the life of politics*. Ringwood, Vic: Viking, 1984, p 541. The entry quoted is from 19 August 1969.

knew we weren't getting caught up in threats to us ...it seemed to be the best way to put whatever fears there were at rest.' As for the proposal that Australia consider talking to the Russians, it was not Freeth's suggestion, 'but I didn't see any harm in it.' But with all the good intentions in the world, Freeth seriously misjudged the situation, as he later conceded: 'People badly wanted to be alarmed.'<sup>19</sup>

Freeth's speech did not self-germinate. On 10 July Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko had said in Moscow on 10 July that 'the prerequisite and potential for an improvement of our relations with Australia exist.' Gorton had already suggested to the House on 25 February that a series of non-aggression pacts in Asia could help remove suspicions associated with and increase cooperation between stakeholders in the region. Building on this, Freeth asserted: 'If the Russian proposals prove to be in line with these general objectives, and would assist to facilitate their achievement, we would naturally consider them with close interest.'<sup>20</sup>

The speech was reasonably well received by some major newspapers, with the *Age* of 15 August going as far as to say it assessed foreign affairs issues 'with a measure of maturity and balance.' On the same day the *Australian* commented that the speech was a 'lucid, temperate and thoroughly practical analysis' and demonstrated 'highly significant new emphases, a strong vein of pragmatism and a more genuine note of flexibility than we have been accustomed to in recent years.' But Freeth's apparent toleration, if not overt encouragement of a Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean was at odds with that of other major players: India and Indonesia had received the idea with coldness. Moreover, in a remarkable interview with the *Bulletin* on 22 August Freeth

---

<sup>19</sup> 'Record of Interview with Sir Gordon Freeth in His Office in Perth, WA, 9 August 1984', Gavin Souter Papers, National Library of Australia. The interviewer was Peter Edwards.

<sup>20</sup> *CPD* House of Representatives 14 August 1969, pp 311-312.

mused that increased Soviet presence in Asia might at least help to prevent countries of Southeast Asia from adopting the Chinese form of Communism.

Gair met Freeth's declarations, including his odd touting of Russia's possibilities as an anti- Communist force in Southeast Asia with predictable scepticism:

*The Freeth response is wrong for many reasons. It is a naïve acceptance of Soviet language.... Flirting with the Russians will only reinforce Australia's image in Asia as feckless and rudderless. It will make us look like servile colonials always looking for a great and powerful mother country. Finally, it will make us look like racialists [sic], looking for another white supporter when the British and the Americans are running out.*<sup>21</sup>

Gair later called Freeth's statement 'an open invitation to a major Communist power to fill the vacuum.'<sup>22</sup> He described the speech as 'a radical shift to the left'<sup>23</sup> and warned 'The leopard [that is, Soviet Communism] has not changed his spots.'<sup>24</sup>

Very soon after Freeth's speech, the minister for Defence, Alan Fairhall, announced that he was retiring from politics: so close were the two events that there was an inevitable perception that they were linked. Gair certainly thought so: 'The real reason for Fairhall's retirement is that as a man of great political integrity he cannot stand by to see Australia's defences denuded or accept the government's change of policy in relation to the Soviet Union.'<sup>25</sup> Although Gorton and Freeth appeared to be blasé about the Russian presence, others were not. ANU defence expert Tom Millar had

---

<sup>21</sup> B A Santamaria, *Against the tide*, p 317. Gair was speaking on 29 August 1969 at the South Australian State Conference of the DLP.

<sup>22</sup> 'Foreign Policy: DLP Will Turn on the Heat', *News Weekly* 27 August 1969.

<sup>23</sup> *Australian* 18 September 1969.

<sup>24</sup> *Australian* 25 August 1969.

<sup>25</sup> Alan Reid, *The Gorton experiment*, Sydney: Shakespeare Head Press, 1971, p 305.

earlier told Howson he was 'particularly worried' about the effects of Russian submarines in the Indian Ocean on trade with Europe.<sup>26</sup>

Gair himself had previously shown interest and concern in the strategic significance of the Indian Ocean. In September 1968 he had asked in the Senate:

*As 45% of Australia's total trade and at least 80% of its oil imports pass through the Indian Ocean, and as British naval power, which has maintained the security of the Indian Ocean since the middle of the last century, will have been completely withdrawn within 2 years, what steps does the government propose to take to meet this situation?*

The answer supplied by the defence minister through Senator Kenneth Anderson could not have been blander:

*The government has a continuing interest in the security of the Indian Ocean area, particularly in view of its importance to our lines of communication and trade. Many other countries share our concern for the security of the region and as opportunities arise exchanges of views take place at various levels concerning the future security requirements of the area. The United Kingdom will continue to have defence commitments in the Indian Ocean. The government will also be considering the strategic situation in this area in the course of its current review of defence policy.*<sup>27</sup>

Never one to be assured by a simplistic answer to anything, on 10 October 1968 Gair told the Senate that he felt he and the DLP were voices in the wilderness on the issue: 'No country is protecting the Indian Ocean at present; it is left open, But this fact does not seem to be concerning very many people.'<sup>28</sup> It certainly was not concerning Bill Hayden, who could see the reasons for the outrage of Gair and others: 'The DLP and Liberal backbenchers dependent on DLP preferences were staggered beyond belief,

---

<sup>26</sup> Peter Howson, *The Howson diaries*, p 420. The relevant entry is for 2 May 1968.

<sup>27</sup> CPD Senate 17 September 1968 p 678.

<sup>28</sup> CPD Senate 10 October 1968, p 1182.

for their political existence depended on this demonology not being even faintly demythologized.’<sup>29</sup>

A few days after Freeth’s speech, on 20 August, Gair spoke in the Senate on the ‘most notable and alarming feature of the Budget’, a five percent reduction in defence expenditure, six weeks after Defence Minister Fairhall, had warned of Russia’s growing influence in the Indian ocean. Gair argued that this was inconsistent and unwise, coming as it did at the same time as Britain’s planned withdrawal after 1971 and the likely resurgence of American isolationism. ‘All point to increased defence expenditure, not reduced defence expenditure.’

After Freeth’s speech, so uncomfortable were the DLP with this aspect of coalition defence policy that the question of preference allocation inevitably arose. The secretary of the DLP’s Western Australian branch was brutally unsubtle: ‘John Gorton defends us or down the skids he goes.’ Gorton himself evinced an impression of pained surprise at the DLP attitude: ‘I find it difficult to believe, if the party is motivated by principles and concern over defence, as it is, that they could give their preferences to Labor.’<sup>30</sup>

The issue simmered in September, with Gair continuing to ask questions in the Senate. In referring to an article written by Dr Lawrence Whetten in the Royal Institute of Foreign Affairs journal, asserting that Soviet Union’s bid for control of the Indian Ocean ‘was the most immediate Kremlin objective now that the USSR has

---

<sup>29</sup> Bill Hayden, *Hayden; an autobiography* p 143.

<sup>30</sup> *Australian* 23 August 1969.

penetrated the Mediterranean,' Gair was persistent in this thirst for knowledge, and wanted to know:

*For how long will the government continue to play down or ignore the obvious dangers associated with increased Soviet activity in the Indian Ocean? When will the government come to its senses and realise that no Australian government should in any way facilitate or encourage the extension of Soviet influence in this region?*

Senator Anderson, representing Freeth in the Senate, said of Gair that 'He obviously imported into the question an expression of some political views', and added that Freeth had been asked in the House if the government had had any negotiations with USSR regarding the security of Southeast Asia, and if there was anything in the minister's statement on 14 August to suggest that negotiations might take place.

Freeth had answered:

*..I have been amazed at some of the fantastic suggestions that have been attributed to that statement. Neither in it or anywhere else does there exist any proposal to have with the Soviet Union any security arrangement or military pact, or any other of the irresponsible proposals that have been ascribed to that statement.*<sup>31</sup>

This notwithstanding, the DLP interpreted Freeth's speech as meaning that the coalition were abandoning forward defence and embarking on a policy course that could include negotiation and appeasement with Communist forces in Southern Asia. Once more Gair and his colleagues used the issue of preferences, announcing that they would defer preference allocation until after the coalition and Labor party policy speeches. The DLP were not alone in their concern. The Country Party was also somewhat put out by the speech, with parliamentary leader John McEwen saying he

---

<sup>31</sup> CPD Senate 12 September 1969 p 792.

would announce a separate election policy on defence if the Liberals did not rescind their policy on the Indian Ocean.<sup>32</sup>

Wily and calculating as ever, Gair made it clear that while the DLP would not risk victory for the ALP and its new leader, Gough Whitlam, they could make things very uncomfortable for the government by the selective withholding of preferences in order to decrease the government's majority, something that the polls indicated was a strong possibility anyway.<sup>33</sup> The DLP demanded that the government should build a naval base at Cockburn Sound, retain forces in Singapore (whether the British remained there or not), seek an effective regional alliance in place of SEATO, maintain a naval presence in the Indian Ocean and generally increase defence expenditure. According to Gair in the *News Weekly* of 17 September 1969:

*It is extremely wrong for the government to permit Australia to emerge as the sole apologist for the extension of Soviet power in Southeast Asia. Despite the enormous gifts of arms to India and its careful cultivation of Japan, both India and Japan have rejected Soviet overtures. Why should Australia emerge as the single nation to give respectability to a power which even India and Japan distrust? Since Soviet naval power will grow rapidly near our shores, it is essential to establish a smaller but countervailing Australian naval power based on Cockburn Sound. This would preserve the freedom of the seas in the Indian Ocean, which is strategically and economically essential. It would prevent the harassment of Australian and friendly shipping in all conditions short of total war. The government's second duty is to undertake specifically that it will do nothing to facilitate Soviet military pacts whose secret protocols would certainly envisage Soviet bases in Southeast Asia.*

Gorton tried to bluff the issue out for a few weeks, and in the House on 9 September he rejected suggestions that the Russian naval presence in the Indian Ocean was part of an 'encircling movement.' He added:

*In regard to areas of influence in the areas of the ocean, I can only say it would depend in which direction such influence is exercised whether it should*

---

<sup>32</sup> Peter Howson, *The Howson diaries*, p 544. The entry quoted is for 5 September 1969.

<sup>33</sup> See another section of this chapter for a discussion on the threatened withholding of preferences in the 1969 election and on other occasions.

*be regarded as inimical to our interests or not. If such influence is exercised for helping relieve the international debt burden of such countries as Indonesia or other countries to build up their economic strength, I cannot regard such actions as inimical to our interests at all.*<sup>34</sup>

After only one week, however, Gorton issued a 'definitive statement' which represented a complete about face on the issue:

*We should feel ... that our ultimate security in Australia would be threatened by the establishment of any Russian naval or military bases anywhere in our own region. We feel that any military alliance between Russia and a country in our own region would pose a threat to ourselves...For we think that would be dangerous for us. That should be made clear.*<sup>35</sup>

Gorton defused the issue by promising that the Cockburn Sound naval base would be begun in the next financial year, with progressive enhancements to be made to its capacity, new ships would be bought for the navy, the Learmonth airfield would be brought up to the appropriate strength for Indian Ocean operations. Finally, Australia would take more interest in the Indian Ocean as Britain withdrew from the region.<sup>36</sup>

Gair was satisfied. 'The Government now appears to admit the utter foolishness of any tricky schemes dreamt up in remote areas of the Department of External Affairs, for getting the Russians to replace the Americans as the foundation of Australian security.'<sup>37</sup> Having figuratively bludgeoned Gorton into submission, Gair later used the events as a rallying point for the potential DLP vote, declaring in his 1969 policy speech: 'I am asking for the Australian people to show their approval for the persistent way in which the DLP had used its position and significance to secure stronger defences for Australia and a return to sanity in the conduct of Australia's

---

<sup>34</sup> *Age* 10 September 1969.

<sup>35</sup> *Age* 16 September 1969.

<sup>36</sup> Paul Reynolds, *The Democratic Labour Party*, Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, pp 74-75.

<sup>37</sup> 'Government Backs Down – Or Does It?', *News Weekly* 24 September 1969.



foreign relations.’<sup>38</sup> Columnist David Solomon commented: ‘The DLP has tasted blood, and likes it.’<sup>39</sup>

In February 1972 the Joint Foreign Affairs Committee brought down a report on the Indian Ocean that Gair felt vindicated the DLP’s stance. Gair warned darkly: ‘Russian history shows us that it has never sent its navy to an ocean in the interests of the countries contiguous to that ocean.’ But as Gair admitted, the Committee’s report did ‘dismiss for the present the prospect that the Soviet naval presence represents a direct threat to Australia’s defence security unless in the situation of a general war.’ Still, the report also claimed that: ‘there is a danger that Australia by her complacency in relying on the United States, Great Britain and Japan for her trade and defence is playing into the Soviet hands without considering the Soviet presence.’

The report concluded with a series of seventeen recommendations, all of which Gair and the DLP approved of, and all of which he believed deserved ‘the closest examination by the government.’ He noted especially that Recommendation 1 ‘urges the development of a Pacific and economic defence community, which my Party urged, advocated and propagated in 1958.’ Gair commended the ‘Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs for the scope, depth and detail with which it has considered the consequences for Australia’s security of the growing Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean. I believe that the report completely vindicates the policy of my party and the concern it has had about the Indian Ocean.’<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> ‘DLP: The Key To Australia’s Future’, *News Weekly* 15 October 1969.

<sup>39</sup> *Australian* 19 September 1969.

<sup>40</sup> *CPD* Senate 23 February 1972, pp. 66-70.

Gair's belief that the Russians were likely to interfere with merchant shipping in the Indian Ocean was not shared in other quarters. One expert pointed out that if Russia did so, then other powers could easily retaliate and make things very difficult for Russian merchant shipping in other parts of the world. Almost all of Russia's seaborne foreign trade passed through either the Danish Straits, or the Bosphorus, each of which was less than five kilometers wide, and the movement of same could easily be inhibited in retaliation for Soviet action in the Indian Ocean, or anywhere else.<sup>41</sup> If this was so, it then follows that Gair, using the leverage of preference allocation, bullied a national government into diverting millions, and perhaps billions of defence dollars into the implementation of policies insuring against a threat that was much less urgent or likely than the ideological agenda of Gair and the DLP portrayed it.

Gair's views on other aspects of foreign policy did not materially change between his election to the Senate and the end of the 1960s. He was still calling for the development of nuclear power as a deterrent, and a strong role for Australia in any formal regional arrangements that involved co-operation among the non- Communist countries. In the *News Weekly* of 9 November 1966, he had warned of the danger of Communist subversion of the authority of non- Communist Asian countries: 'If we do not face up to this immediate danger, here and now, we won't have the stomach to deal with the greater danger, should it emerge later.' He still wanted an Australia that was self reliant in defence with National Service training and adequate naval power, as well as a domestic aircraft industry that ensured that Australia was not dependent on overseas supplies and components.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> Geoffrey Jukes, 'What's At Stake in the Indian Ocean? The Facts and Myths', *National Times* 17 March 1972.

<sup>42</sup> 'Strategic Response?', *News Weekly* 6 August 1969.

The Federal Executive of the DLP, like Gair, saw merit in a regional defence pact, envisioning that a regional Southeast Asian defence pact that included Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Singapore and other Asian nations would act as a swift answer to subversion and guerrilla warfare. The executive believed that such a pact would 'stem the erosion of Asian confidence in the future and provide evidence that regional defence is a practical proposition.'<sup>43</sup> To this end, the DLP lobbied for an overseas trip for Gair and DLP Federal Secretary, later Senator, Jack Kane. In January 1970 Prime Minister Gorton finally approved an overseas trip for them, an eight week tour of Southeast Asia. *News Weekly* believed the trip was necessary after Gorton's 'generally offhand attitude' to Southeast Asia and the alleged perception 'behind the polite diplomatic small-talk in Southeast Asian capitals' that the Australian government would let them down. The *News Weekly* held that the tour would show Southeast Asian leaders 'that in Australia there is at least one resolute force which will not abandon principle, and which has proved itself powerful enough to force the government to stand by some of its commitments' and that Gair's trip, costed at a few thousand dollars, would represent 'far better value than [the government] has yet obtained from the heavy sums spent annually on maintaining the External Affairs Department.'<sup>44</sup>

Gair did obtain some publicity overseas on his visit. Taipei's *Express news* of 25 March 1970 carried his call for the formation of a military alliance to check Communist expansion and aggression. Speaking at a press conference in the Central Hotel, Gair proposed 'an anti- Communist confederation' to fill the power vacuum that American and British withdrawals from Southeast Asia would cause, although the

---

<sup>43</sup> 'DLP Calls For Southeast Asia Defence Pact', *News Weekly* 13 August 1969.

<sup>44</sup> 'Gair Will Play A Vital Role', *News Weekly* 28 January 1970.

newspaper noted that Gair did not explain the shape that the confederation would take. Gair spent a week in Taiwan and was received by President Chiang Kai-Shek. He was then scheduled to go to Saigon, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore and Jakarta before returning to Canberra.<sup>45</sup>

After meeting with Malaysian Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, Gair spoke to Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew on the political and defence situation. While in Singapore, Gair once more hammered the theme of a regional defence pact. By this time, the Vietnam War had spread to Cambodia, and Gair warned of the dire consequences:

*If the Cambodian crisis plunges the whole of Indochina into war, and if Vietnam is lost, then the Communists will advance southwards and threaten the whole region... the countries in the south must be prepared to face the enemy. Unless they have worked out some form of defence arrangements among themselves, things will be difficult.*<sup>46</sup>

To Gair and the DLP, Communist China was a particular bete noire, even more so than Soviet Russia. Gair saw China as an aggressive and expansionist power, seeking to increase its influence in South East Asia. On 1 September 1965 he told the Senate:

*I think it is patent to all thinking people that Communist China will seek to dominate the whole of South East Asia and much more besides. The area in which it will seek predominance includes Australia and New Zealand. If we are prepared to accept the military and political predominance of China in our country, we have no problem at all. If we are not prepared to accept the military and political predominance of China, we have a serious problem.*

Gair saw Communist China as the real beneficiary in the event of an American and Australian withdrawal from South Vietnam. He claimed in the Senate on 24 August

---

<sup>45</sup> A typed transcript of this press cutting, is in the Gair Papers, Press Cuttings, Series 12 Box 14, National Library of Australia.

<sup>46</sup> 'Gair in Southeast Asia', *News Weekly* 29 April 1970.

1966: 'There is no doubt that Communist China poses a long term threat to Australia's security, and the Vietnam conflict is the most immediate manifestation of Communist disruptive tactics in this part of the world.' Gair went on to say that the Vietnam War should concern Australia more than the United States:

*America has nothing to gain from being in Vietnam, and has not as much to lose as Australia in the event of the Communists winning the Vietnam war. But in the event of the American troops and the Australian troops being forced out of Vietnam by some circumstance, what would happen is very patent to any thinking person who examines the position and who also examines statements made by the top brass of Red China. He will appreciate that with the fall of South Vietnam to the Vietcong and to the Communists generally, the march would proceed to Cambodia, Laos and Thailand, and then to Malaya and Singapore, which is only 1 500 miles from Darwin.*

When challenged as to the identity of the Chinese 'top brass' that had made the statements, Gair dodged the question, did not specify a senior Chinese source, took a crude swipe at the interjecting Senator, Cavanagh saying "I could always depend on the honourable senator ... to defend [China] and the Communists generally', and concluded with much pugnacity and little logic: lamely:

*In any case we have no evidence from the Red Chinese or from any of their confreres that China does not propose to conquer South East Asia. We have no such assurance and so we are entitled to the benefit of the doubt.'*<sup>47</sup>

Gair was also very much against the sale of wheat to Communist China, apparently unaware of the financial benefits to Australian farmers that resulted from those sales:

---

<sup>47</sup> CPD Senate 24 August 1966, p 88. In fairness to Gair, he could have cited, as did B A Santamaria, statements by those such as Liu Shang Cheng, Vice President of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, who said on 8 June 1960 that war between the Communist and non- Communist worlds was inevitable and that Communists must 'continuously expand the revolutionary forces of the people within the imperialist countries.' When Liu visited Victoria in October 1960, protesters against his visit were assaulted in Melbourne and in Morwell in the Gippsland coalfields. B A Santamaria, *Against the tide*, pp 290-291.

*The Prime Minister justifies our sale of wheat to Red China by saying that it improves our economic conditions and assists us in our war effort in South Vietnam. I am one of those who has sought unsuccessfully to ascertain the true terms of sale of wheat sent to Red China. I have never been able to obtain those details. The government spokesmen tell us that it is a matter for the Australian Wheat Board, and the representatives of the Wheat Board say that the Board does not disclose the terms of sale. I suspect that Red China is buying wheat from Australia on very favourable terms of sale. If there is any advantage to Australia, it is a very short term one. It is a short sighted policy for Australia to have anything to do with trade with Red China.*

Even when Tasmanian Liberal Senator John Marriott queried Gair as to why Chinese women and children should not be fed if Australia could supply the food, Gair barely broke his stride: ‘... we can bet that the peasants of Red China get little or none of our wheat. The bellies of the soldiers certainly would be full. They would be well nourished so that they could carry out further mischiefs and continue to disturb world peace.’<sup>48</sup>

In the Senate on 22 April 1971, with the onset of ‘ping pong diplomacy’, Gair argued vigorously against the recognition of Communist China. China’s aggressive past record, Gair argued, against Tibet, India and UN forces in Korea disqualified it from consideration for recognition, to say nothing of the problems associated with the need for security at the Chinese embassy and its perennial insistence of sovereignty claims over Taiwan. Moreover, ‘Communist China’s endorsement of an inevitable world war for the triumph of Communism renders her unworthy of recognition or entry to the family of nations.’<sup>49</sup>

Gair’s well known satirical wit was to the fore the next month when he asked Liberal Senator Reginald Wright (minister representing the minister for foreign affairs) facetiously if he would facilitate arrangements for Opposition Leader Gough Whitlam, who was planning to visit China, ‘to meet his counterpart when he is in that

---

<sup>48</sup> CPD Senate 27 April 1966, p 616.

<sup>49</sup> CPD Senate 22 April 1971, pp 980-984.

country with a view to ascertaining whether his counterpart enjoys the same measure of freedom, liberty, privileges and concessions that Mr Whitlam enjoys as Leader of the Opposition in this Parliament?' Wright played along with the joke. 'The point is well taken that Mr Whitlam will search in vain for an Opposition or a leader of it in mainland China. The answer to the honourable senator's question is quite willingly, yes.'<sup>50</sup> While Gair aimed this barb in the cause of humor, when it came to US President Richard Nixon's proposed visit to China, the point he made was a serious one. 'The fact that President Nixon is to visit Peking at least opens the possibility that another Munich is in the making.'<sup>51</sup>

The most contentious question in Australian foreign policy during Gair's time in the Senate was, of course, its presence in Vietnam: Australian military advisers were first sent to Vietnam in July 1962, and the nation formally ceased its involvement in the conflict by proclamation of the Governor-General on 11 January 1973.

Gair and the DLP were consistent in their support for an Australian presence in Vietnam. Senator Jack Kane recalled 'We were even more pro-Vietnam than the Liberals were. They were a bit wishy-washy about it.'<sup>52</sup> Surprisingly enough, however, Gair had a sympathy and, indeed, 'the greatest respect' for genuine conscientious objectors, and on 12 June 1968 moved an amendment that extended the right of appeal for conscientious objectors up to the High Court of Australia, and also

---

<sup>50</sup> *CPD* Senate 18 May 1971, p 1958

<sup>51</sup> *Age* 30 August 1971.

<sup>52</sup> Jack Kane [Interview] ORAL TRC 4900/46, National Library of Australia, p 16:7

removed the provision compelling the relatives and doctors of conscientious objectors to impart confidential information about them.<sup>53</sup>

On 2 February 1968, barely a couple of weeks after taking office, Prime Minister John Gorton stated that Australia would supply no more troops to Vietnam.

Characteristically blunt by nature, he did not even leave himself the option of reviewing his decision later. 'As far as I'm concerned, that's a permanent statement.'

Gair was appalled:

*It is beyond my understanding how the Prime Minister can say that neither now nor in the future, will we increase our Vietnam commitment. The necessities of our Australian troops already there may one day demand such an increase – yet the Prime Minister has tied his own hands.*<sup>54</sup>

Gair wrote to Gorton on the matter on 9 February, seeking assurance and clarification, and making a thinly veiled threat that the Prime Minister could not have failed to note:

*I believe that it was a mistake for you to make such a definite and binding comment about the future of our Vietnam commitment, because no one can be sure of future developments in this war. It may be that the necessities of our Australian troops already there may one day demand such an increase.*

*Nor did I think that it was an appropriate time to make such a comment, especially when the major Viet Cong offensive had just commenced.*

---

<sup>53</sup> It should be noted, here, however, that on 8 May 1968 Gair issued a press statement (referred to by him in the Senate the next day) saying that the *National Service Act* should be strengthened to ensure that 'in justice to young men who observe the law and accept their duty to their country, others are not allowed to evade their duty.'

<sup>54</sup> 'Will Australia Try to Meet the Challenge?', *News Weekly* 7 February 1968.



*I sincerely hope that you will enlighten me regarding your official comments, so that I can reassure Democratic Labor Party supporters who have already discussed the matter with me, that they are not keeping in government an administration which has an ambiguous attitude towards the Aust commitment in Vietnam.*

Gorton replied on 19 February, reiterating that Australia was not going to increase the levels of forces in Vietnam, 'but this involves no weakening in our resolve to see the matter through.'<sup>55</sup> It would not, however, be long before Gorton would be paying much more attention to the thoughts of Vince Gair.

Gair kept himself alert to the most indirect signs of transactions with the enemy. In September of 1968 a flotilla of seven Polish ships arrived in Australian waters: they had unloaded cargo at Hanoi and intended to pick up cargo at various Australian ports. The truculent Gair wanted to know how the government could support the war effort in Vietnam at the same time as it was countenancing indirect assistance to Communist countries that were supplying war materials to North Vietnam. The trade and industry minister's representative in the Senate reassured Gair that the Polish flotilla had been trading in a number of South East Asian ports, including one in North Vietnam, and that any connection between Australia and North Vietnam engendered by their activity was 'of a very indirect character.'<sup>56</sup>

On 24 November 1971, when Australian troops were set to withdraw from Vietnam, Gair asked the Senate to record their appreciation and gratitude to the Australians who had served in Vietnam for their dedication and sense of duty, and to express sympathy

---

<sup>55</sup> Vince Gair to John Gorton, 9 February 1968: John Gorton to Vince Gair, 19 February 1968. Both letters are in the Gair Papers, Series 1 Correspondence Box 2 Folder 16, National Library of Australia.

<sup>56</sup> CPD Senate 8 October 1968 p 1056: *Sydney Morning Herald* 11 September 1968, CPD Senate 24 September 1968, p 879: CPD Senate 25 September 1968, p 921: CPD Senate 26 September 1968, p 983.

to the relatives of Australians who had died there. It was a seemingly non-controversial motion that should have had the support of all parties. But Vietnam had riven wounds in the fabric of Australian society were far too fresh for such a motion to pass without debate and controversy.

Opposition leader in the Senate Lionel Murphy proposed that Gair's motion be added to by registering disapproval of Australia's military intervention in Vietnam and for adequate entitlements to all those who had been maimed or injured in the conflict. Murphy referred to 'an illegal, immoral, unjust and undeclared war' and told the Senate: 'We have divided our society. We have stained our reputation throughout the world.' His amendment, according to the December 1971 edition of the DLP party organ, *Focus*, was 'not only distasteful politics, but in extremely poor taste.' The government, the DLP and one independent Senator united to defeat the Labor leader's motion and to revert to Gair's original one, which was then carried unanimously.<sup>57</sup>

Gair was supportive of the South Vietnam President Thieu's offer to include the Communist National Liberation Front in free elections. Despite his anti-Communist stance, or perhaps because of it, he was keen to see the Communists accept the challenge to participate. 'They have always claimed they represent 80% of the people of South Vietnam. Let them put this claim to the test.' Typically pugnacious, he said that if the NLF refused the challenge, it would prove what the DLP had always said: that they did not represent more than 20 percent of the people. 'They are afraid of the

---

<sup>57</sup> 'Labor and the Diggers – Lousy with Politics', *Focus*, December 1971.

verdict of free elections. The only way in which they can win is out of the barrel of a gun.’<sup>58</sup>

Gair’s attitude to foreign policy while in the Senate was consistently and enthusiastically anti- Communist. His viewpoint was a simplistic one, and at times led to a distorted perception, or even a neglect of logistical realities, as was the case with the overstated threat posed by Russia in the Indian Ocean. By the end of his time in the Senate he had fought, feared and loathed Communism for almost forty years. Although the world around him had been through several different incarnations his perceptions never changed. Gair did not resile from his virulent anti- Communist sentiments, even when another old Red-baiter, American President Richard Nixon opened dialogue with Communist China and Soviet Russia in 1972. His reluctance to change, or at least to adapt, would, once more, cost him dearly.

#### **9.4 KEEPING THE NEXUS AND FORESTALLING AN ELECTION**

When the government proposed a referendum in 1967 that would drastically alter the composition of the Parliament, Gair was immediately on guard about the potential threat to the DLP. The government proposal was to break the 2:1 nexus between the numbers in the Houses of Parliament. Had the referendum been passed, then the House of Representatives would not have had twice the number of parliamentarians as the Senate, and instead the number of members in the House of Representatives would have been dependent on the population of the electorates, not the numbers of the Senate. An immediate increase of twelve or thirteen in the lower house was

---

<sup>58</sup> *News Weekly* 16 July 1969.

envisaged, as was a minimum representation quota of 85 000, but in Gair's view it would only be the start of the dilution of the role of the Senate.

Gair held that Australia was already 'grossly over-governed', with one national parliamentarian for every 61 700 people, as opposed to one for every 335 000 in the United States. The intention of the referendum was 'to dwarf the country vote and overshadow smaller parties such as the Country Party and the DLP.'<sup>59</sup>

Gair told the Senate:

*...the position of the Democratic Labor Party on the nexus section is clear. We believe that it is a valuable section with an extremely useful purpose. It is better than a quota as a check against unwarranted increases in the size of the National Parliament. It is a guard against any attempt to weaken the position and standing of the Senate. We hold that whenever an increase in the number of national parliamentarians is warranted, it should be made in the present ratio of 2:1.*

According to Gair, the coalition government had a hidden agenda in bringing on the referendum. A census had been held in 1961, and between April and July 1962 electoral boundary commissioners in the various states had determined the need for new boundaries based on population shifts. But when reports on the redistribution came before Parliament in early December 1962, the Country Party and the ALP, unusually, voted together to defeat their adoption, and, as Gair said, 'Faced with this impasse the government sought alternative ways of overcoming the objections of the Country Party and the ALP.' Neither the Country Party or the ALP favoured the redistribution as it stood, because both parties feared the loss of seats which they had regarded as strongholds, but an increase in the total number of seats would overcome most of the objections of both parties. New seats were slated for establishment in provincial and urban areas, where the ALP fancied its chances of winning additional

---

<sup>59</sup> *Canberra Times* 29 January 1967.

representation. While the Country Party was less hopeful, it at least believed that it would not lose any seats under the proposal associated with the breaking of the nexus. But neither party wished to see the Senate increased in size.

In speaking against the proposal in the Senate, Gair produced population projection figures showing that if the formula was adopted, the number of members in the House of Representatives would increase from the figure of 122 in 1967 to 216 members by 1986 and 290 members by 2000. (The population projections were much higher than what would eventually transpire, but using the formula, the 2005 estimated population figure would have resulted in approximately 240 members.)

Gair cited the example of one of the participants in the Federation debates, Richard Edward O'Connor from New South Wales, who at the 1897 Constitutional Convention argued strongly in favour of the nexus provision. O'Connor had said:

*If the 50 000 quota goes on without check or hindrance, as long as that quota remains, the numbers will go on rapidly increasing ... our experience in these colonies is, that it is a very difficult matter to reduce a House, and for the same reason it would be a difficult matter to reduce a quota.*<sup>60</sup>

The argument that the typical member of parliament was overworked cut no ice with Gair. 'Parliamentarians have greater facilities and greater conveniences now than they had formerly. I cannot believe for one minute that the job is so arduous that members of Parliament today cannot perform their duties to greater advantage than could members of Parliament in former years.'<sup>61</sup> One hopeful parliamentarian, who Gair, in a rare moment of political compassion, did not name, hit on the idea of trying to

---

<sup>60</sup> CPD Senate 7 March 1967 p 285-292.

<sup>61</sup> CPD Senate 4 May 1967 p 1187.

quantify the amount of work involved in compiling legislation and other parliamentary work by tallying the number of pages in the Commonwealth Acts and Government Gazettes for previous years, starting from 1948. The tedious and time-consuming exercise bemused Gair: 'He counted all the pages in the 'Gazette' and in the Acts to support his claim that members of the House of Representatives are overworked. One could not have a better case than that in support of our claim that they are not overworked.' <sup>62</sup>

The 'nexus' part of the referendum was soundly defeated, and the status quo with the numbers was maintained. The Liberals, the Country Party and the ALP all united to urge a national 'yes' vote on the issue, with only the DLP Senators, Gair and McManus, arguing for the 'no' case. Given they represented a party that attracted less than ten percent of the vote, it is a moot point whether Gair and McManus's opposition was decisive: from the figures, supporters of all parties must have voted against the proposal, doubtless unified by a common horror at the thought of more politicians. But Gair, as was always his wont, enjoyed the victory anyway. As one pundit put it: 'Vince Gair's two-man team was the only team to say NO. And the people of Australia voted NO. [So] If you see Vince Gair over the next few weeks, don't think he is becoming more rotund than ever. It could be that he is just throwing out his chest – and with ample justification!' <sup>63</sup> The year after the so-called 'nexus' referendum, Gair called it 'one of the triumphs of my political life'. <sup>64</sup> In the early twenty-first century, few electors would be pleased at the thought of a House almost double its present size. Virtually no one realises that this is what Gair and McManus,

---

<sup>62</sup> CPD Senate 19 May 1967, p 1883.

<sup>63</sup> 'A Remarkable Comeback for a Cast-Off Labor Premier', *Sunday Truth* 4 June 1967.

<sup>64</sup> CPD Senate 26 September 1968, p 993.

as the only politicians of any consequence to oppose the proposal, just may have prevented.

It was widely reported in 1968 that Prime Minister John Gorton wanted to hold an early election, but the DLP opposed the idea, partly because of its disagreement with Gorton's defence policies and partly because of the financial exigencies that an early election campaign would entail for the finances of the party. According to Gair in the Senate on 10 October, 'no good and sound reason has been advanced for an extraordinary election to take place 14 months before the scheduled time for the next federal election.' Mischievous as ever, or perhaps remembering the awkwardly large majority he had led in Queensland, Gair suggested that perhaps Gorton felt the 'burden' of his thirty-eight member majority in the House of Representatives, and wanted it lightened: 'But who is he to get rid of?'

On 13 October 1968 Gair told the party's central Queensland zone conference that if the government called an early election, there would probably not be time for it to revise what the DLP perceived as 'gravely deficient' defence and foreign policies.

The threat was enunciated in terms that for Gair were cautious, but it was unmistakable just the same:

*It would be a betrayal if the DLP were to submit to an attempt to silence that one political voice that over the years has called attention to the need for an effective defence and foreign policy. ... If the government will not accept any discipline from the Parliament, it must at least be prepared to accept some discipline in the electorate. This is not a discipline which we would either desire or use to assist the defeat of the government, but it is a discipline which in a proper measure would provide that stimulus to the government which has for years been absent because of the total ineffectiveness and unacceptability of the Australian Labor Party as an alternative Australian government.*<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> *Courier-Mail* 14 October 1968.

At the time, it was rumoured that eleven marginal seats had been targeted by the DLP, who would either deny the government preferences, or simply not run candidates in those seats. Three of them were in Queensland.<sup>66</sup> Gorton decided not to go with an early election, but denied that the DLP actions had anything to do with his decision, claiming ruefully that he was sorry that he missed out on that particular fight.<sup>67</sup> The episode was, however, a positive for the DLP, as Peter Samuel recounted a couple of months later:

*The DLP got more attention and publicity in those few months than ever before in its history. It called the shots in a protracted war of nerves against an election, and it won.*<sup>68</sup>

Some years later, the mischievous Gair admitted to bluffing the government: ‘The Liberals caved in. We didn’t really have anything to back up our threats. It was all bluff and they fell for it.’<sup>69</sup>

## 9.5 THE ISSUE OF PREFERENCES

Preferences from the DLP were always important in federal elections after the split. They were vital in preserving the Menzies government in the ‘credit-squeeze’ election of 1961, where the government won twenty-seven seats after DLP preferences were distributed. Seven of these seats (in four states) had the ALP candidate leading on a first-past-the-post basis, but the Labor lead was dissipated when DLP preferences were distributed. At the federal election of 1966, the first after Gair arrived in Canberra, the new Prime Minister, Harold Holt, had a comfortable victory, but won

---

<sup>66</sup> Paul Reynolds, *The Democratic Labor Party*, p 74.

<sup>67</sup> Alan Reid, *The Gorton experiment*, p 151.

<sup>68</sup> Peter Samuel, ‘The Splinter that Grew Into a Tree’, *Bulletin* 14 December 1968.

<sup>69</sup> Neil O’Reilly, ‘Gair’s Goodbye’, unidentified clipping, but handwritten date says 3 April 1974. Whitlam Papers, Series M522/0, Item G1. Senator Gair’s Appointment. National Archives of Australia.



twenty-one seats on DLP preferences, and probably appreciated the five extra seats that his government won after DLP preferences reversed early ALP counting leads.<sup>70</sup>

No political observer could have credibly doubted the government need for DLP preferences as the 1969 election approached. Labor's prospects were renascent, and they had a new, charismatic leader in Gough Whitlam who had proved a match for Gorton in parliament. Labor was fresh from its 1969 federal conference, which decided that Australia should withdraw from Vietnam, endorsed the concept of needs-based grants to schools of all religious affiliations, and declared its commitment to a comprehensive universal health insurance scheme and the reinstatement of free hospital care. Party historian Ross McMullin described the 1969 conference as 'one of the ALP's most constructive', and 'generally productive, cohesive and forward-looking', and Whitlam's performance there as 'enhanc[ing] his stature within the party and the nation as a whole.' After a decade and a half in the wilderness, Labor was looking viable again,<sup>71</sup> and it was clearly not a time for the coalition government to be discounting the value of DLP preferences, particularly at a time when the Vietnam War was becoming increasingly unpopular.

With the Freeth episode, the Democratic Labor Party and Gair questioned – or said that they questioned – the wisdom of automatically giving their preferences to the coalition. The DLP made no secret of their disdain for Freeth. On 20 August, less than a week after the external affairs minister's speech, Gair had said that Freeth 'should have been the last of the available Cabinet material to be appointed to that important position.' Leftwing Queensland ALP Senator George Georges asked Gair if the DLP

---

<sup>70</sup> L F Crisp, 'The DLP Vote 1958-1969 – and After', *Politics* vol 5 no 1 May 1970.

<sup>71</sup> Ross McMullin, *The light on the hill: the Australian Labor Party 1891-1991*, South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1991, pp 325-326.

was going to take away Freeth's preferences, and Senator Cavanagh commented that the DLP would support Freeth anyway. Gair retorted: 'We are not left with a lot of alternative when we have a party which all through the years has disclosed its affinity with and affection for Red Russia and Red China and which talks about isolationism and the withdrawal of troops.'<sup>72</sup>

But despite Gair's declaration, Gair and the DLP examined alternative courses of action. Jack Kane, Federal organiser for the DLP and later Senator for New South Wales talked to Gair about the approaches that could be made by using preferences as leverage against the Liberals. Kane suggested that the party either not run candidates in marginal seats, or direct preferences against the Liberals in those seats unless Gorton reversed his defence policy. Kane also floated the idea of not fielding DLP candidates in marginal seats held by Gorton's personal supporters, so that a Liberal government, but not a Gorton government would be returned, but Gair, never one to avoid confrontation, did not favour the simple non-running of candidates. 'If you're going to be a dog, you might as well be an Alsatian', Gair said, 'So let's tell Gorton that we'll direct preferences against him in these seats.' Gair phoned Gorton with the decision.<sup>73</sup>

Gair demanded two undertakings from the government in return for DLP support. Firstly, Gair demanded that Australia establish a naval force based at Cockburn Sound in Western Australia. Secondly, he demanded that the government undertake not to help Soviet military pacts in Asia. Gair conceded that Gorton could do nothing to

---

<sup>72</sup> CPD Senate 20 August 1969 p 215.

<sup>73</sup> Jack Kane, [Interview] ORAL TRC 4900/46, pp 14:6, 16:14, 16:20, National Library of Australia. According to Paul Reynolds, *The Democratic Labor Party*, p 74, there were eleven seats earmarked for this special treatment: St George, Barton and Evans (NSW), Bowman, Griffith, Herbert (Q), Maribyrnong and Ballarat (Victoria), Grey and Adelaide (SA) and Perth (WA.)

prevent Soviet activity in the Indian Ocean, but insisted on the establishment of the base as a counterweight to this activity, showing Australia's disapproval of the extension of Soviet influence in Southeast Asia. The second specification was vague, with Gair insisting that the government 'undertake specifically that it will do nothing to facilitate Soviet military pacts whose secret protocols would certainly envisage Soviet bases in Southeast Asia.'<sup>74</sup> Given the presumably negligible input that previous Australian governments had in the facilitation of Soviet military pacts, it was a curious stipulation, but as it could be fulfilled by doing nothing, the Gorton government was no doubt happy enough to comply with it. Kane recalled: 'Gorton hung tough for a couple of weeks before agreeing to boost our naval defences in the west.'<sup>75</sup>

Satisfied with Gorton's pragmatic reversal of policy, the DLP generally gave its preferences to the government, although its backing was not enthusiastic by any means. Where there were three-cornered contests involving the Country Party and the Liberals, the DLP, in a slap in the face for Gorton, gave their preferences to the Country Party. In a couple of seats the DLP gave their preferences to Independent Liberals, and in some strong ALP seats in Victoria, DLP preferences were directed to a breakaway ALP group.<sup>76</sup> The preferences were allocated in alignment with the election time schedule. The DLP announced that it would allocate preferences on 14 October. This date was six days after Gorton's policy speech, and eleven days before

---

<sup>74</sup> 'DLP Ultimatum on Preferences', *News Weekly* 17 September 1969.

<sup>75</sup> Jack Kane, *Exploding the myths: the political memoirs of Jack Kane*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1989, p 173.

<sup>76</sup> Alan Reid, *The Gorton experiment*, p 332.

the election. But there was a slide in government support, and, pragmatic as ever, the DLP announced their preference allocations four days early.<sup>77</sup>

The DLP did not give any preferences to the ALP ahead of the Liberals. Gair made it clear how Gorton's falling into line had contributed to the DLP's preference decision. 'The Prime Minister has repudiated any intention of acquiescing in the extension of Soviet influence in Asia. He has promised to increase the defence vote, to seek a regional alliance in Southeast Asia, to maintain National Service, to begin building a base at Cockburn Sound, and to maintain a naval presence in the Indian Ocean.' In the light of such extensive assurances, perhaps Gair felt that he could be magnanimous. 'However belatedly, and as a result of whatever pressures, these promises are on record.'<sup>78</sup>

In Freeth's seat of Forrest, Western Australia, a leakage of DLP preferences away from him ensured a Labor victory: as there was an overall swing against the government, it is difficult to know for sure if DLP animosity towards him brought about his downfall.<sup>79</sup> The Gorton government saw its majority slashed to nine seats. A few years later a DLP publicist would write: 'It is quite likely that the government was saved from defeat only by its late adoption of realistic defence policies.'<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>77</sup> B A Santamaria, 'Struggle on Two Fronts: the DLP and the 1969 Election', *Australian Quarterly* December 1969, p 41.

<sup>78</sup> 'No Preferences for the ALP', *News Weekly* 15 October 1969.

<sup>79</sup> Paul Reynolds, *The Democratic Labor Party*, p 75. Freeth himself blamed the swing against Gorton in farming areas in Western Australia which had a 'shockingly bad year' and said 'If you analysed those figures there was nothing that you could really attribute to the Indian Ocean statement. I would have said there was one hundred votes in it, one way or another.' 'Record of Interview with Sir Gordon Freeth in His Office in Perth, WA, 9 August 1984', Gavin Souter Papers, National Library of Australia. The interviewer was Peter Edwards.

<sup>80</sup> 'Government's Defence Report Adopts 'Self-Reliance' Theme', *Focus* October 1972.

From a purely mathematical view, the government had certainly been saved from defeat by DLP preferences. After DLP preferences were distributed in thirty-one seats, the government won twenty-eight of them, including eleven in Victoria. Twelve of these seats saw the first preference lead reversed after the distribution of DLP preferences: all were ultimately won by the coalition. Malcolm Mackerras was absolute on the point: ‘There can be no doubt that DLP preferences alone clinched sufficient majorities for government candidates in 1969 to keep the Liberal-Country Party coalition alive.’<sup>81</sup> While the DLP could credit itself with changing coalition defence policy and keeping the coalition in government, it could hardly take reassurance from its vote. The percentage of overall votes dropped from 7.2 in 1966 to 5.9 percent and in every state the DLP vote was down. Frank Dowling, DLP Senatorial candidate in the party heartland of Victoria only got 9.7 percent and never looked like winning. Three weeks before the election, a Gallup poll had found that Catholic support for the DLP was declining, probably because of the resolution of the state aid issue. Even the DLP’s notorious reputation as ‘the donkey party’ did not help: despite having two thirds of its candidates at the top of the ballot slips, the DLP vote still fell.<sup>82</sup> It is a curious paradox of the 1969 election that the DLP vote was the lowest at a time when their preferences were at their most vital.<sup>83</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup> Mackerras, Malcolm. ‘The DLP Vote 1958-1969 – And After’, *Politics* vol 5 no 1 May 1970.

<sup>82</sup> ‘The Grandeur and Misery of the DLP’, *Bulletin* 8 November 1969.

<sup>83</sup> The statement that the DLP vote was at its lowest requires some clarification. The DLP got 6.0 percent of the vote in 1969, the lowest since 1958. While the DLP only polled 5.2 percent at the federal election of 1955, this was before the existence of the Queensland Labor Party, whose tally was, logically enough, added to that of the DLP in the 1958 and 1961 elections to get the DLP total.

## 9.6 GAIR, THE DLP AND SOCIAL WELFARE

Most political observers placed the DLP on the right of the political spectrum, a reflection of their emphasis on defence and foreign policy and their hard line stance on those issues. The perception arose because these were the aspects of DLP policy that were the most highly publicised, but the DLP's domestic policies had elements that were central, and even radical. ANU political scientist Alan Hughes placed it somewhere between the coalition and the ALP in most domestic matters of 'socialist content', with its supporters being more favourable to government business enterprise, the enlargement of social services and the scaling of taxation to favour the disadvantaged than the coalition, though not as 'progressive' as the ALP in these respects. But to the surprise of many, Hughes found that on matters of 'conscience radicalism' – capital punishment, third world aid, non-European immigration and Aboriginal rights – the DLP were 'decidedly the most progressive and left wing' of all political parties.<sup>84</sup> The next year the authoritative *Current Affairs Bulletin* commented that the DLP's 'extreme right wing' label has been hard to sustain in recent years – the DLP being, on so many issues, the centre party of Australian politics.' The journal cited the DLP's prevention of the enacting of provisions in the *National Service act* that would have obligated parents to inform on their sons if they did not register for the draft: the DLP advocacy of reform and deletion of some of the penal clauses of recent arbitration legislation: and its criticism of the recent cabinet-ordered Commonwealth Police action against Canberra publisher, Maxwell Newton.

85

---

<sup>84</sup> Peter Samuel 'The Splinter that Grew Into a Tree', *Bulletin* 14 December 1968: Jack Kane, *Exploding the myths*, p 172.

<sup>85</sup> 'The DLP – Political Third Force', *Current Affairs Bulletin* v 44 no 8, 8 September 1969. Maxwell Newton was a financial journalist, and former co-founder of the *Australian* who published economic newsletters that often featured material based on leaks from the Gorton government, with whom he had

Gair always believed that politics was a means to help the disadvantaged, and this was not a notion to which he merely paid lip service. As a comparatively young man during the Depression, he had, by all accounts, demonstrated with many of his needier constituents that his heart, at least, was in the right place. Indeed, he fitted the concept of helping the disadvantaged into something even bigger than politics. During the debate on the *Social Services Bill no 2* on 16 September 1971 he declared:

*[I]n any country that has a way of life based on Christian principles, it is obligatory and imperative that the poor, the aged, the invalid and those who are in need of our assistance be cared for. Christ said that we would always have the poor with us. He also said that it was our obligation to show charity towards them.*

Nearing the end of his political career, he declared:

*I have been close to the people for forty years or more. I know the difficulties that people suffer through sickness and want, their need for hospitalization and ophthalmic treatment, schools for the blind and deaf, and crèches and kindergartens.*<sup>86</sup>

One particular bugbear with the DLP and with Gair was the penalisation of those who had showed thrift during their working lives and were penalised by receiving only limited government benefits when they ceased employment. Gair often told the story of a (perhaps hypothetical) pair of public servants who he made presentations to on the same day that both retired after fifty years service. One had saved, educated four children, acquired a cottage as well as the family home and taken out as much superannuation as he could. The other had taken out only one unit of superannuation, the minimum that he was obliged to take. Yet he was able to qualify for the pension, but the thrifty man did not. ‘Was this just?’, Gair asked his fellow Senators. ‘Could honourable Senators get a better picture than this of the iniquity and injustice of the

---

a poisonous relationship. His premises were raided several times by the Commonwealth Police at Gorton’s behest.

<sup>86</sup> CPD Senate 20 August 1972 p 545.

means test?’<sup>87</sup> He advocated the abolition of the means test, believing that it could be implemented gradually. He commented acerbically at one point: ‘The party to which I belong has advocated in its policy speeches a phasing out or a policy of gradualism – not as gradual as that of the present government.’<sup>88</sup> Gair suggested that it be first eliminated for the over-80s (at a cost of \$30 million), then for those over 79 and so on. Eventually, the means test for all over 65 would be eliminated at a cost of \$305 million.<sup>89</sup>

DLP social welfare policies deliberately laid great stress on the need to assist families. The emphasis showed in their policies on the need for family assistance in education, greater tax concessions for families, maternity allowances and child endowment.<sup>90</sup>

Gair was a firm believer in the justice of child endowment to assist large, young families. As one of a very large family himself, he could not have failed to have been touched, from a young age, by the plight of large families. In his reply to the Budget in September 1968 he made it clear his belief that some families would increase their family numbers in response to incentives in the form of child endowment. He did not mention his Catholicism, nor anything that would clash with it:

*I do know that a big percentage of our married people would increase their families if they could be satisfied that their economic position would not be worsened greatly and that they would merit an increase in child endowment to meet any additional costs associated with the birth of another child. They would hail the birth of another child in such circumstances, but they fear an increase in their families because of the additional financial burden placed upon them for their contribution towards solving Australia’s population problem without any accompanying financial allowance.*<sup>91</sup>

---

<sup>87</sup> CPD Senate 25 September 1968 p 935.

<sup>88</sup> CPD Senate 18 April 1967 p 871.

<sup>89</sup> CPD Senate 16 September 1971 p 825.

<sup>90</sup> ‘The DLP – Political ‘Third Force’?’, *Current Affairs Bulletin* 8 September 1969.

<sup>91</sup> CPD Senate 25 September 1968 p 933.



The DLP record with child endowment was a good one. In the leadup to the 1971 budget they were able to persuade the Liberal Treasurer, Billy Snedden, to alter the rate of child endowment to provide an increase of fifty cents a week for third and subsequent children. Gair could see two good outcomes from the increase. 'The increase will be of benefit to those people who recognise the necessity for and the importance and wholesomeness of having a population of our own and of having children born under decent conditions.'<sup>92</sup> The maintenance of Australia's population numbers was important to Gair, and he viewed with concern overseas reports that the populations of West Germany, Sweden, Denmark and Portugal were falling.<sup>93</sup> Perhaps it was naïve and blinkered of Gair to hope that simple increases in child endowment would persuade families to have more children, when there were so many other socio-economic factors mitigating against large families, but the party's record with child endowment was one of which he was fondly proud. In his last days as a Senator, Gair's face 'softened' when he spoke of what he described as the DLP's greatest achievement: 'We made sure child endowments were kept up.'<sup>94</sup>

## **9.7 GAIR, THE DLP AND THE ISSUE OF STATE AID TO INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS**

Gair had long been in favour of state aid to independent schools, although it was taking it too far to claim, as one opponent did, that he hated state schools.<sup>95</sup> As the product of an independent school himself, and a taxpayer who, as he reminded the

---

<sup>92</sup> *CPD* Senate 16 September 1971 p 823.

<sup>93</sup> *CPD* Senate 5 October 1971, p 1088.

<sup>94</sup> *Canberra Times* 3 April 1974.

<sup>95</sup> *CPD* Senate 19 May 1971, p 2083.

Senate on 20 August 1969, contributed to the running of State schools while sending his sons to independent ones, he was a long term supporter of state aid. Although it was lost in the dramatic maelstrom of other circumstances in the eventful year of 1957, the Federal ALP had dropped state aid from its policy at the Federal Conference in September, the month after the defeat of the Gair state government. But the DLP had maintained its support since then, and political circumstances had seen a turnaround in the attitude of the Federal coalition government on the issue.

On 30 August 1960, Prime Minister Robert Menzies had asserted in Parliament that financial aid to state schools was outside the jurisdiction of the Federal government. But the near defeat of the Menzies government in the election of 1961 (won famously by only one seat) led to a change of heart on the issue. DLP preferences had proved critical in the coalition retention of power, and Menzies saw state aid as a means of consolidating them.<sup>96</sup> In 1963 the Commonwealth Government proposed to make funds available for Commonwealth scholarships in both government and independent schools, and for the establishment of science blocks, and later libraries, in both sorts of schools.<sup>97</sup> Menzies did a complete turnaround on his declaration of August 1960, and, as Gair said, ‘from 1963 onwards he acted as if those words had never been uttered.’<sup>98</sup> Gair would claim in 1968 that Menzies had dreamed up the science blocks scheme, borrowing the New South Wales ALP state conference’s ‘still-born child’ whereby it was resolved that Premier Jack Renshaw’s budget provide for payment to independent schools for the construction of science blocks. (The Federal executive of the ALP intervened and stopped Renshaw from implementing the scheme, prompting

---

<sup>96</sup> CPD Senate 24 August 1966 pp 91-92. Gair did not choose to mention on this occasion that the ALP reinstated the provision before the 1961 election.

<sup>97</sup> For a very full treatment of the state aid issue, see H S Albinski, *The Australian Labor Party and the aid to parochial schools controversy*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1968.

<sup>98</sup> CPD Senate 24 August 1966 p 92.

Gair to note that while he had been expelled from the ALP for not carrying out a conference decision, Renshaw had not been permitted to carry one out.)<sup>99</sup>

As was the case when Gair was premier, when he entered the Senate, the school system was under strain because of the influxes of student population, still affected by the expansion of the baby boom years. Gair believed the government could save money by contributing to independent schools on a per capita basis, rather than leaving it to the state school system to educate young Australians. He, or someone in the DLP, had tabulated that it cost a state government approximately \$230 a year to educate a child in a state school, but that the dual system could be maintained, with great savings, if the Federal government would provide independent schools with funding of \$50 per pupil to every independent secondary school, and \$30 per pupil to every independent primary school.<sup>100</sup>

The DLP itself was advocating ‘a Student Endowment for each child attending a private school, the amount to be calculated on the basis of the amount spent per head on the education of children in the State Education system.’<sup>101</sup> Gair refined the idea in his 1966 policy speech, saying that the formula for this endowment would be calculated on a similar basis to that in place for paying federal health benefits. The DLP state aid policy, according to Gair, fulfilled three objectives. Firstly, the fundamental right of a child to assistance was safeguarded. Secondly, the child’s

---

<sup>99</sup> CPD Senate 12 November 1968 p 1898.

<sup>100</sup> CPD Senate 24 August 1966 p 91.

<sup>101</sup> J T Kane, *Origins and role of the DLP*, Sydney: DLP, 1965, p 38.

parents were able to freely choose which school the child attended. Thirdly, the independence and authority of the school's management was safeguarded.<sup>102</sup>

Although the government had conceded much on the issue of state aid to independent schools, Gair was not satisfied with the progress that had been made, and in August 1968 he foreshadowed a private member's Bill to compel the government to contribute financially to independent schools on the terms he had outlined two years before. According to Gair:

*The needs of independent schools are immediate and urgent. Many of them, particularly the church schools, are unable to accept all children who apply for admission. They cannot embark on the building programs they require. They cannot pay their lay teaching staffs the salaries they deserve or pay the salaries that will attract lay teachers into the independent school systems. They are extracting the maximum possible contribution from the parents of children already attending such schools. In short, they urgently need government assistance, in many cases just to provide basic essentials, such as the payment of building and other capital costs and staff salaries, not something secondary such as libraries.*<sup>103</sup>

On 12 November 1968 Gair submitted his *Independent Schools (Financial Assistance) Bill* to the Senate.<sup>104</sup> The Bill, however, was defeated, but by the end of the 1960s, state aid was almost dead as an issue. The degree of Federal government assistance to private schools increased in scope and in relative and absolute terms during the decade, but as Reynolds explains, it is difficult to attribute these developments solely to DLP pressure. A significant section of the governing Liberal Party favoured state aid, and independent schools associations directly lobbied the government on the issue without overt DLP input. However, the DLP had been the

---

<sup>102</sup> Democratic Labor Party. "For a Safe and Prosperous Australia": the Policy of the Democratic Labor Party for the Federal Elections November 26, 1966', pp 13-14. Gair Papers, Series 7 Box 7 Elections Folder 60, National Library of Australia.

<sup>103</sup> CPD Senate 21 August 1968 p 217.

<sup>104</sup> CPD Senate 12 November 1968 pp 1901-1902.

only political party that consistently advocated state aid, and for that surely some credit is due.<sup>105</sup> As the *Sydney Morning Herald* expressed it on 14 November 1963, ‘the offer to the denominational schools has been made in that very auction room atmosphere in which the DLP, and some others, had always calculated that the wedge could, first, be inserted and then in due course widened.’

## 9.8 THE BALANCE OF POWER MAN

With the half Senate election of 1967, the DLP emerged with a one hundred percent increase in the number of its Senators (from two to four, when Gair and McManus were joined by Condon Byrne from Queensland and Jack Little from Victoria) and, even more satisfyingly, the balance of power. In the Senate on 28 March 1968, Gair placed three interpretations on the very favourable result:

*[F]irstly, that the majority of voters did not want to see the Senate made a rubber stamp by giving the government parties a majority in the Senate; secondly, an equal majority of the voters did not want to see the Senate turned into a chamber of frustration by giving the ALP control; and thirdly, an increasing number of voters were satisfied with the role that the DLP had played in the Senate since 1965, our policy and the caliber of our candidates and those voters desired to reinforce the DLP representation and its hold on the balance of power.*

There could be little doubt that Gair ever did anything but relish his role as the balance of power man. ALP Senator Justin O’Byrne, most certainly no friend to Gair, (although destined to play a significant part in his life a few years later), said in the Senate on 5 June 1968: ‘The members of the DLP are over inflated with their own importance. They are cash-in merchants on many of these things, but I must hand it to the honourable Senator [Gair] that he is a great man for getting in on the publicity.’

---

<sup>105</sup> Paul Reynolds, *The Democratic Labor Party*, p 45.

From 1 July 1968 the party held the balance of power, the first time since Federation that a small party had done so. Gair declared that his party would favour neither of the major parties in its decisions. ‘We won’t be an anti-government or an anti-ALP party. We will function with responsibility and judiciousness. We will continue as watchdogs for the public. Any legislation that is not in the best interests of the public will be opposed by us.’<sup>106</sup>

What must have been the icing on the cake for Gair was that, unlike in a former lifetime, he no longer had to pay obeisance to a party organization, or any other outside body. As stated explicitly in rule 46 of the DLP constitution, the Federal Executive had no power to instruct members of Parliament although it was permissible for it to ‘draw their attention to the policy of the party, and any action on the part of the [parliamentary] member which it considers a breach thereof.’ Rule 11 provided that in the event of a dispute, a joint conference between Conference members and members of the parliamentary party would be held to determine the issue. The provision was a compromise between the virtual freedom of the Liberal members of parliament and the profound degree of control exerted by the ALP organization over their members. No joint conference was ever called.<sup>107</sup> Even Santamaria, influential as he was elsewhere, had little success in suggesting policy lines for the DLP. Gair, along with his senatorial colleagues McManus, Little and Byrne were, as Peter Samuel noted in late 1968, ‘independent-minded men with plenty of self-confidence and ability to initiate new lines of policy’ who operated with

---

<sup>106</sup> ‘An Historic Day for the DLP and Aust’, *Courier-Mail* 2 July 1968.

<sup>107</sup> Paul Reynolds, *The Democratic Labor Party* Brisbane: Jacaranda, 1974, pp 19-20: ‘The DLP – Political ‘Third Force’?, *Current Affairs Bulletin* 8 September 1969.

complete independence, only occasionally and casually cooperating with Santamaria and the National Civic Council.<sup>108</sup>

Gair took delight in his power, and did not mind displaying that delight. A 1969 interview, held at Gair's home, recorded that the Senator 'probably never looked happier' as he peered at the interviewer through the foliage of a huge bowl of plastic flowers and told him 'I'm on top of the world.' The interviewer, Glyn May, described Gair as 'the most singly powerful figure in Australian politics today.' When quizzed about his power, Gair said it was 'tremendous', but added 'but I think we use it judiciously and with a great sense of responsibility.'<sup>109</sup> He told an interviewer in late 1972:

*The DLP, occupying the position of balance of power in the Senate, has never been much concerned about the origins or the source from which a resolution or motion emanates. We've always been interested in the merits of it. On numerous occasions we've supported ALP resolutions because we believe they have merit. But in the majority of cases we've supported the government because we believe the majority of their submissions were worthy of support. We've carried out our duties responsibly and judicially [sic] and for that I believe we have won a lot of credit.*<sup>110</sup>

It was always realised that the DLP's major obstacle was 'the diffidence of uncommitted voters to vote for a party which they believe cannot govern.' Their great hope was that they would make a breakthrough in one or two Victorian seats in the Federal parliament.<sup>111</sup> It was hypothesised in September 1969 that a breakthrough was a slim possibility in some industrial and small-farming electorates of Victoria,

---

<sup>108</sup> Peter Samuel 'The Splinter that Grew Into a Tree', *Bulletin* 14 December 1968.

<sup>109</sup> Glyn May, 'He's the InVincible Thorn of Gorton: I'm on Top of the World! Says DLP Gair', *Telegraph* 18 August 1969.

<sup>110</sup> Bruce Juddery, 'More than just a titular head', *Canberra Times* 22 November 1972.

<sup>111</sup> *News Weekly* 11 June 1969.

four rural seats in New South Wales and the Queensland seat of Herbert, based around Townsville. Even hypothetical victories such as these would depend ‘on the luck of the fall of preferences’. But no lower house victory in the Federal sphere ever materialised.<sup>112</sup> In March 1968 Gair called, probably without too much optimism, for ‘some form of proportional representation in the House of Representatives’, because the DLP, which had ‘quite considerable support’, still had no lower house representation. He drew comparisons with the Country Party, which received about the same number of votes as the DLP, but had a ‘quite healthy representation’ in the House of Representatives.<sup>113</sup> Gair, of course, failed to mention two things that he could not have failed to know about. Firstly, the Country Party was a rurally based party with most of its support corralled in certain regional areas, and this often resulted in seats. But while the DLP drew small amounts of support from most parts of Australia, but even in its strongest state, Victoria, there were no major definable areas where it was supported by a majority. Secondly, whatever necessity there was for proportional representation was partially met by the very existence of the Senate, which ensured the representation of smaller parties such as his own. Gair was thus left to wield by holding the balance of power, rather than by having the numbers. Nothing in Gair’s career suggested that he preferred holding power by default to the actual power he had experienced for so long, but nothing suggested that he the situation was not one that he did not relish.

---

<sup>112</sup> ‘The DLP – Political ‘Third Force’?’ *Current Affairs Bulletin* 8 September 1969.

<sup>113</sup> *CPD* Senate 28 March 1968 p 401.



The Federal election of 1969, the famous ‘Don’s Party’<sup>114</sup> election was a triumph for Gair as well. He achieved his defence and foreign policy goals, by pressuring Gorton before the election, and, after it, could claim that the DLP had saved the government’s hide through preferences. Barely a year later, however, Gair had his greatest triumph as a federal parliamentarian. At the Senate election of 1970 the four DLP Senators, Gair, McManus, Byrne and Little were joined by party organizer Jack Kane from New South Wales, making a bloc of five.

Gair made the most of his victory, as he ‘puffed a huge cigar and wore his proudest smile.’ For a brief moment, it might have seemed to an observer that the old cold warrior could have gone on forever. ‘It feels good. There have been a lot of battles. You know, when this campaign began they made a lot about my age. I’ve worked hard but I repair quicker than the younger fellows. I don’t feel any older than I did a fortnight ago...I’ve been through a lot of elections and a lot of campaigns. They have been a lot bloody harder than this.’<sup>115</sup> For a man of almost seventy, his health was excellent. He had never been in hospital until August that year when a bout of flu saw him hospitalised in Canberra for a few days. His wife testified at the time: ‘His mind is just as active as ever, and he seems to have boundless energy.’<sup>116</sup>

Although Gair had been an energetic and capable sportsman in his younger days, there is no documented proof that he was interested in, or had ever played one fringe

---

<sup>114</sup> This notable play by David Williamson reveals Williamson’s view of Australian society with the depiction of an election night party, attended by people of various socioeconomic backgrounds. Early in the evening it appeared that Labor might register a surprise victory, but as the night wore on, the return of the government, albeit with a greatly reduced majority, became apparent, much to the disheartenment of most guests at the party. Gair is briefly mentioned in the play. When someone asks Don, the host, if he has been listening to Gair’s comments in the last couple of weeks, Don replies derisively: ‘Mad fascist bastard.’ This brief interchange was dropped from the 1976 film.

<sup>115</sup> *Sunday Mail* 22 November 1970.

<sup>116</sup> ‘Mrs Gair likes to fade out of politics’, *Courier-Mail* 25 November 1970.

sport, table tennis, or ping pong. But now his life would be changed because of the actions of the members of a ping pong team who to this day are almost certainly unaware of Gair's existence. He had discounted their influence in the Senate on 22 April during the debate on the recognition of Communist China over Taiwan, making it clear that he did not consider the matter one of urgency: 'I do not accept that the invitation of a few ping-pong players to Peking is a matter important enough to cause the Senate to debate a motion such as this.'

Gair was wrong, for the 1971 visit of American ping pong players to China was the first act in the process of détente and a thawing of American relations with China, and later Russia. In retrospect, it marked the beginning of the end of the Cold War, although there would be serious, but temporary renewals of tensions after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late 1979, the Russian shooting down of Korean Air Lines flight KAL-007 in 1983 and various sabre rattling pronouncements from President Ronald Reagan in the mid-1980s on an 'evil empire.' On a much smaller scale, however, the famous ping pong tournament marked the precise moment when, at least in matters of foreign policy and defence, Gair and his colleagues started to cease to be relevant.

## **9.9 GAIR'S DECLINE AND FALL FROM THE DLP PARLIAMENTARY LEADERSHIP**

The election of 1970 would prove the high water mark for the DLP. Its influence waned considerably until by the Federal election of 1972 its relevance had declined dramatically. With the advantage of hindsight, DLP Senator and Federal organiser Jack Kane was able to pinpoint at least four reasons for this decline.

Firstly, the Nixon détente with the Russians and Chinese ‘defused and devalued’ the concept of anti-Communism as a political policy.<sup>117</sup> Broadly similar parties such as Japan’s Social Democrats and Italy’s Christian Democrats declined in influence around the same time. Secondly, the softening of Catholic attitudes towards Communism led to an erosion of this section of voters. Thirdly, the effectiveness of the coalition declined after the resignation of Menzies, culminating in the ineffectual leadership, after March 1971, of William McMahon. Fourthly, the DLP demonstrated ‘an inability to renew its image, update its rhetoric and produce a new leadership able to appeal to an increasingly youthful electorate.’<sup>118</sup>

Certainly the DLP never wavered in its hostility to Communism or Communist nations, but the problem was that it maintained that hostility irrespective of the conduct of said nations as members of the international community. In the mid 1950s, Communism had appeared to be monolithic on all fronts, but despite the fragmentation of Communism, both domestically and internationally, the DLP had not updated its viewpoint and was still calling for the need for strong defence against the Communist threat, even after the Sino-Soviet split of the late 1960s and the palpable easing of tensions after Nixon’s visits to China and Russia. Domestically, the fragmentation of the Communist Party of Australia into three factions, coupled with miniscule support at the polls – after 1955, the Communist Party never scored more

---

<sup>117</sup> As late as December 1968, however, ‘Communism’ was seen as a danger to Australia by 89 percent of Australian voters. (Peter Samuel, ‘The Splinter that Grew Into a Tree’, *Bulletin* 14 December 1968.)

<sup>118</sup> Jack Kane, [Interview], ORAL TRC 4900/46, National Library of Australia, p 17:2. In the *News Weekly* for 31 January 1973, it was noted that ‘apart from reasons of image’ there were two reasons for the decline in the DLP vote: the atmosphere of détente, and the impact of the general decline in religious conviction on the Catholic vote.

than one percent of the vote at a Federal election again – did not lead to an easing up of anti- Communist rhetoric either.

Frank McManus offered another reason for the decline in DLP popularity after late 1970. ‘From then on, we got a very poor deal from the Press and the media ... we had become a danger to the established parties. I haven’t got any doubt at all that this freeze ... was due to the fact that we had done too well and they started to become scared of us.’<sup>119</sup> McManus certainly showed some signs of having thought that the party had done ‘too well’, taking himself on a six month cruise after the 1970 election. There was a view that the party’s future was guaranteed by virtue of its Senate representation, but DLP strategists believed that the Senate vote was the true indication of its popularity, rather than looking at the decline in support levels in House of Representatives voting. Since 1958 the level of support in lower house elections had declined every election, but few within the party viewed this with special concern.<sup>120</sup>

Despite his self-assurance after the November 1970 half-Senate election, Gair was giving clear evidence of his age. In October 1971 he was interviewed on *Monday conference*, a current affairs program. Gair, of course, had not grown up with television, and did not appear on it until flying down for an interview during the 1957 Queensland split. It was never his medium, although on at least one occasion he had been praised for his television personality, and, appropriately, for his simplified view of the world:

---

<sup>119</sup> Frank McManus [Interview] ORAL TRC 121/72, National Library of Australia, p 54.

<sup>120</sup> Gerard Henderson, ‘Democratic Labor’s Last Hurrah’, *Australian Quarterly* March 1975.

*Hearty Humpty-Dumptyish Senator Gair is one of TV's pleasantest personalities.*

*Unshakably good-natured, he possesses the knack (rare in television) of reducing seemingly complex issues to a simplicity even the politically innocent can grasp.*<sup>121</sup>

But the *Monday Conference* program, and more specifically the panel, gave Gair little credence for this tendency to simplify issues. Nor did they spare him when his lifelong blinkered outlook manifested itself on television. They attacked Gair over the Queensland DLP branch's call for \$4 billion to be expended on defence in capital costs alone over the next ten years. One panellist, Max Teichmann, a politics lecturer from Melbourne's Monash University, asked Gair 'Have you gone into how many men you'd need, extra men, to man these things, and how much it would cost to run this force over a yearly basis?' Gair admitted that he had not, but thought that the DLP defence committee had. When pressed, he could not name a likely attacker or invader for Australia, and the panel did not spare him when they asked him where the money would come from:

David Solomon: ... *the money has to come from somewhere, and I'm sure people would like to know where your party would like it to come from; whether it should come from social services, education, cuts in government spending on schools, or from increased taxation.*

Gair: *Where does all money come from? Where does the money come from for the rural crisis? Where does the money come from for anything we want?*

Solomon: *But where would you like it to come from in this case?*

Gair: *We'll get it from those who can afford to pay.*

Solomon: *More taxation?*

Gair: *Yes. They've got most to lose.*

Teichmann: *And they'll pass it on, and that'll be inflation.*

Gair: *We can arrest that, too.*

Teichmann: *And then you cut down their savings and you have a slower growth rate.*

---

<sup>121</sup> *Age* 27 October 1971. The journalist was John Pinkney.

Later on, Teichmann did not mince words:

*Really, your defence policy seems like a dog's breakfast to me. It's got everything in it. It's going to cost the earth, and you know perfectly well you'll never have to implement it. I mean this is the virtue of being irresponsible. This is going to break this country and you can't even tell us who we're going to be fighting.*<sup>122</sup>

Much later, Senator McManus confirmed Gair's extreme discomfiture with television, saying: 'He was shy of it, it was a strange medium to him. He was quite a confident speaker on other occasions but on television he always found tremendous difficulty.' The filming of Gair's policy speech usually took two days, and interruptions were frequent. The public relations firm used by the DLP repeatedly suggested that they use someone else, but no one dared broach the possibility with Gair. On one occasion, the ABC program, 'Four Corners' ran a profile of Gair, in tandem with that of Doug Anthony, leader of the Country Party. Anthony was young, personable and conventionally handsome, but, according to McManus, Gair 'whether from the angle they took him, or whether he was tired, he looked about 90.' The contrast was obvious. The television crew filmed Gair drinking in a public bar, and, later, addressing a street meeting: cruelly, on that occasion, the camera was swung around to show that no one had been standing listening. But Gair, as ever, was too blinkered to see the obvious, or, if he did, too stubborn to concede his limitations as a media personality. McManus tried to convince him to give way and let someone else handle the television appearance, but Gair insisted on being on television. As McManus later recalled:

---

<sup>122</sup> 'Monday Conference' no 24, 25 October 1971. Transcript, held in National Library of Australia.

*[A]nd of course, it was a disaster, an absolute disaster. The result was that there was a demand for his resignation. Several states said that he was bad on television, and cost us thousands of votes, they said that if he stayed on, they wouldn't feel inclined to put in an 100 percent effort in the future because he negated what they were trying to do.*<sup>123</sup>

In May 1972 there was an ugly incident in the House where he claimed that an ALP Senator, Doug McClelland, had threatened to assault him because of an interjection he, Gair, had made. McClelland said he took 'great personal objection and exception' to remarks Gair had made during the division, adding: 'If Senator Gair wishes to go on in a drunkenly obscene manner, he can do so.' Gair retorted: 'I am neither obscene, nor am I drunk.' President of the Senate, Kenneth Anderson asked to see the argumentative pair in his private chamber afterwards, and both agreed to attend. It is doubtful the incident and McClelland's accusations enhanced Gair's stature in his party.<sup>124</sup>

The DLP campaign for 1972 was presaged, and perhaps pre-empted in a blistering article in the Murdoch press by deputy editor of the *Sunday Telegraph*, Evan Williams, who later became a speech writer for Whitlam. Williams predicted that the party, whose conference in Melbourne in August had decided to make censorship the main election issue, would campaign in 'the most lurid and strident terms.' He did not bother to conceal his contempt for the DLP and the 'peculiarly unattractive mixture of malice, reaction and obscurantism that passes for their policies.'<sup>125</sup> Gair was stung by Williams's 'false, splenetic and vicious' attack, and said that Williams purported to know what sort of a campaign the party was going to fight before it knew itself. Chris Curtis, a DLP activist from Victoria simultaneously made the point that the DLP had

---

<sup>123</sup> Frank McManus [Interview], National Library of Australia, pp 93-94.

<sup>124</sup> CPD Senate 9 May 1972, p 1453-1454.

<sup>125</sup> *Sunday Telegraph* 20 August 1972.

some 'laudable' policies that were in advance of the major parties: 'For example, home savings grants (in the form of marriage loans) have been DLP policy for 17 years; abolition of the means test has been possible for over 6 years; educational justice for all children has been policy since the DLP's inception.'<sup>126</sup>

With the 1972 Federal election campaign, the DLP saw the writing on the wall for its previous techniques of stressing the dangers of Communist influence in the ALP in a political environment where the American President had visited China and the end of hostilities in Vietnam appeared to be imminent. Even former Prime Minister John Gorton dismissed the Communist issue, saying that 95 percent or more of the organization behind the ALP was non- Communist.<sup>127</sup> On 11 October the next year, the *Australian* would editorialise: 'Today's ALP is about as non- Communist and middle class as an anti-establishment party can get.' The DLP's base in conservative Catholicism and the general moderation of ALP policies after the 1970 Federal ALP intervention in Victoria removed the grip of the Socialist Left prompted the adoption of a new issue, that of the permissive society.<sup>128</sup>

Not surprisingly, Gair had little time for the members of the counterculture. He took the hardest line possible on illicit drugs:

*[I]n the list of crimes I cannot see anything worse than the illegal manufacture of drugs. Wilful murder, even in cold blood, could not be compared with the gradual destruction of a life by the feeding into a body of drugs that destroy the mental capacity as well as the body fibre of a human being.*<sup>129</sup>

---

<sup>126</sup> *Sunday Telegraph* 27 August 1972.

<sup>127</sup> *Australian* 27 November 1972.

<sup>128</sup> Robert Murray 'The DLP's Anti-permissive Gamble' and Gerard Henderson 'The DLP: Down But Not Out', both in *Politics* vol 8 no 1, May 1973. This special issue of the journal was published as a monograph: Henry Mayer, *Labor to power: Australia's 1972 election*, Sydney: Angus and Robertson, on behalf of the Australian Political Studies Association, 1973.

<sup>129</sup> *CPD Senate* 11 May 1967 p 1388.



On 24 February 1972 he complained about dole money going out to ‘colonies of young people, commonly known as hippies, who are moving from place to place when it suits them, and who have no intention of working if they can avoid it.’ The issue of questionable publications had also come to his attention before. With what was presumably unintentional humour, he told the Senate on 20 September 1966 that:

*[A]s a parent who has been interested in this matter for many years, I never miss the opportunity of examining the type of literature that is being poked under the noses of adolescents, and in my opinion, there is definitely too much emphasis being given to the female form, couples in compromising positions and half naked women, in the literature available to our young people today.*

Before the 1972 campaign, Senators McManus<sup>130</sup> and Little<sup>131</sup> had made statements critical of the permissive society. When the campaign started, a frequently aired DLP advertisement, constantly repeated on radio and television in the main metropolitan centres, made the accusation that the ALP would flood the country with pornography. Gair opened his party’s campaign with an attack on the ‘permissive society’.

‘Children have a right to be protected by the State against the merchants of drugs, pornography and permissiveness’, he declared, adding that permissive policies could destroy a nation just as surely as external aggression. ‘To oppose them is the duty of any party concerned with Australia’s defence, strength, and self-reliance.’<sup>132</sup> The *Age* noted the change of emphasis, commenting that ‘defence took a secondary role to social issues’ in the speech.<sup>133</sup>

---

<sup>130</sup> *Age* 14 August 1972. Letter from Frank McManus.

<sup>131</sup> *Australian* 29 August 1972. Interview with Senator Little.

<sup>132</sup> Brian Johns, ‘DLP Demands Action on Permissiveness’, *Sydney Morning Herald* 13 November 1972.

<sup>133</sup> ‘Gair: Big Concern is Family Group’, *Age* 13 November 1972.

The DLP left itself open, as Gerard Henderson expressed it, ‘to the charge that it was attacking the ALP on ‘permissive’ issues and that it was simply a church party of moral fundamentalists.’<sup>134</sup> Jack Kane later admitted ‘...in retrospect we should have pulled back on that theme.’<sup>135</sup>

The content of Gair’s policy speech received reasonable coverage in the news columns, although the mainstream press did not disdain to conceal its contempt for the DLP in its editorial ones. The *Australian Financial Review* of 14 November 1972 referred to ‘dark and narrow rumblings of primitive prejudice which masquerade as policy.’ Gair’s remarks on permissiveness and pornography, despite being emphasised in the advertisement, only occupied about two pages of a twenty-nine page policy speech, but it was these remarks that were seized upon as ‘distasteful’, ‘obsessive’, ‘paranoiac’ (*Age* 13 November 1972) and ‘shameful’ and ‘misleading’. (*Canberra Times* 13 November 1972.)

Gair’s television personality and presence did not help. He summarised his policy speech in a pre-recorded fifteen minute studio presentation, which did not use studio graphics but was a simple subject-to-camera presentation. The presentation was poorly received, with one commentator remarking that the presentation was more like something out of 1963 rather than 1973.<sup>136</sup> It was rumoured that Gair had recorded the speech at seven in the morning. Journalist and satirist Mungo MacCallum, ever

---

<sup>134</sup> Gerard Henderson, ‘The DLP: Down But Not Out’, *Politics* vol 8, no 1, May 1973.

<sup>135</sup> Wallace Crouch, ‘Kane Still Fears the Red ‘Menace’, *Sydney Morning Herald* 3 December 1975.

<sup>136</sup> Denis Strangman, ‘The DLP and the Press’, *Politics* vol 8 no 1, May 1973.

mindful of libel laws, reported the rumour, adding with feigned innocence, 'I can't think why.'<sup>137</sup>

MacCallum attended Gair's policy speech. After delivering 'the thundering climax' of his speech, MacCallum reported, Gair

*came back and bored the shit out of us for another fifty minutes ...he was still talking about the basic wage (which hasn't existed since 1967) and the Gair government in Queensland (which hasn't existed since Jesus was a boy) and it was all very old and rather sad. One wondered yet again how anyone who had actually seen him in action could actually vote for him; but then, one wondered this about a lot of people.*<sup>138</sup>

Four days before the election MacCallum attended a luncheon where Gair spoke 'to a pitifully small audience.' Gair told the audience that the main election issues were defence, inflation, education, wage justice, family allowance, rural finance and 'a sound approach to social issues.' All of which, as MacCallum said, made it 'a bit hard to understand' why DLP advertising concentrated on censorship, abortion and the electoral system. Gair gave his listeners 'a long blast on porno', citing specific examples while 'warming to his theme with obvious relish.' But most of Gair's speech was 'a long ramble through memory lane, starting with T J Ryan' (Premier from 1915 to 1919) and with 'a long pause in the fifties.' MacCallum reported that Gair was 'rather bitter about it all, and rather pathetic, especially when jokes which probably got a big hand at DLP meetings fell flat on their face.'<sup>139</sup>

---

<sup>137</sup> Mungo MacCallum, *Mungo on the zoo plane: elections 1972-1977*, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1979, p 38. This extract is from MacCallum's article, 'Chicken Little Strikes the Libs', *Nation review* 25-30 November 1972.

<sup>138</sup> Mungo MacCallum, *Mungo on the zoo plane: elections 1972-1977*, p 17. This extract is from MacCallum's article 'At Last The Gough and Billy Show', *Nation Review* 18-24 November 1972.

<sup>139</sup> Mungo MacCallum, *Mungo on the zoo plane: elections 1972-1977* St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1979, pp 55-56. This extract is from MacCallum's article 'Bye Bye Big Ears', *Nation Review* 1-8 December 1972.

The poor reaction to Gair's policy speech was a harbinger for what was to come. The decline in the DLP vote Australia-wide was a small one – from 6 percent in 1969 to 5.1 percent, and as usual they did not get any seats. But the most significant outcome of the 1972 election for the DLP was the victory of the ALP. The key *raison d'être* for the DLP - the deprivation of Federal office for the ALP - was gone. For the DLP, it was a watershed. It was a watershed for Gair as well, who later said: 'I said in 1972 that it thought our useful life was over, and that there was not very much need for us to continue to exist.'<sup>140</sup> The *Melbourne Age* thought so too, editorialising on 5 December: 'The electorate yawned as the hysterical voice warned of the flood of pornography and pot. On the whole, it was a poor substitute for the old horror tales of the Communist hordes - and even less plausible.'

Things did not improve for the DLP after the 1972 Labor victory. At the Victorian state election in May, the DLP vote plummeted to 7.6 percent, compared to 13.3 percent in 1970. One likely explanation for the drop was the fact that 18 year olds could now vote, but the DLP itself preferred to see it as a protest vote against the Federal Labor government, with voters supporting the Liberals to make their point. DLP strategists averred that things would be different in the Senate because the voters knew that the DLP could win seats there, although exactly why this was so was not explained.<sup>141</sup> At the 1973 state by-election in Greensborough, Victoria, there was another harbinger of difficult times when DLP candidate Chris Curtis, one of the party's few prominent young members, was outpolled by the Australia Party 'to the

---

<sup>140</sup> David Armstrong and Tess Lawrence, 'The Splinter is Removed', *Bulletin* 4 April 1978.

<sup>141</sup> Gerard Henderson, 'Democratic Labor's Last Hurrah', *Australian Quarterly* March 1975.

delight of journalists and commentators all over the land.’<sup>142</sup> Curtis admitted his disappointment, but was less forthcoming in conceding that there was a problem, claiming instead that the result demonstrated ‘the apathy and lack of sophistication of the average Australian.’<sup>143</sup>

Throughout the year, the DLP continued to convulse as it tried to find relevance in a post-coalition context. Talks were held with the Country Party over the possibility of a merger, but with the Country Party leader, Doug Anthony, as leader. Kane led the move to a merger, but Gair, ever the realist, supported it. At one stage Anthony said that the Country Party would have no trouble with amalgamating with the DLP on ideological grounds as the DLP ‘are very anti- Communist, they believe in the security of the country and basically they tend to be a conservative group.’<sup>144</sup> But after the May 1973 Victorian state election, Country Party enthusiasm for the idea started to wane, for the simple reason that the DLP had so few votes to offer. For their part, the Victorian section of the DLP were now opposed to the idea. Nevertheless, Gair and Kane still backed it, with Gair reported in the *Australian* of 20 August 1973 as saying that only personal differences were preventing a merger, although the prospects of union were ‘not too bright in New South Wales and Victoria.’ But the structure of the DLP told against it on this occasion: there was simply no machinery by which a national decision such as merging could be reached. The idea died quietly.

145

---

<sup>142</sup> ‘Phoenix Newsletter.’ [Typescript.] Volume 1 no 1 October 1973. Located in DLP Papers, State Library of Victoria, MS10389 B21. This item has a handwritten comment attached to it saying that the DLP executive directs signatories to the publication to use avenues within the party for criticism.

<sup>143</sup> *Age* 19 October 1973.

<sup>144</sup> *Age* 15 March 1973.

<sup>145</sup> Gerard Henderson, ‘Democratic Labor’s Last Hurrah’, *Australian Quarterly* March 1975

1973, Gair's last full year in politics, was the worst year of his political life, with the probable exceptions of 1957 and 1960. But even these two years, taxing as they were, did not have the poignant inevitability that was the hallmark of the old man's final decline. After the party's poor, and his own almost irrelevant performance on the 1972 campaign trail, Gair could only expect pressure from his own party to vacate the leadership. On 5 December 1972 the *Melbourne Age* had editorialised: '[The DLP] would, clearly, be better led by Senator McManus than by the deplorable Senator Gair.'

The party thought so as well. Early in the year, Gair agreed to resign, but he regretted his words, and postponed his resignation several times. Gair was prepared to step down for his old friend, fellow Queensland Senator Condon Byrne, but the urbane, gentlemanly barrister declined to stand, rationalising, probably correctly, that if he did the party would split with the two Queensland Senators, and Kane from New South Wales, against the Victorians McManus and Little. Gair promised to go early in the sitting of Parliament, and then asked the other Senators if he might stay on until after the Constitutional Convention so that he could attend it as leader. Two party meetings had been held after the Convention, but Gair had been recovering from flu in Brisbane and had not attended them. By late September, his colleagues had had enough and asked for his resignation, even if he could not come to Canberra to resign in person. Some wanted to declare that Gair was no longer leader, and elect McManus in his place, but McManus, who in his dealings with Gair had shown sainted patience unusual in the annals of Australian politics, prevailed upon the others to give Gair one more chance to resign. It was only their realisation of how difficult it would be for

Gair to bow out after forty-one years in the public eye, and McManus's calmer counsel that gave him that chance.<sup>146</sup>

In these, his last months in politics, he continued to show the lack of tact, diplomacy and foresight that had cost him so dearly in his forty years as a political figure. In August he stunned the Liberals when he criticised them and their leader, Billy Snedden, for lacking credibility. The ingenuous Snedden had issued a call for an amalgamated anti-Labor party at the Liberal Federal Council meeting in Sydney. 'Mr Snedden's first task should be to restore real credibility to the Liberal Party and to himself as Opposition Leader', Gair snorted. 'Only then can the other non-Labor parties treat seriously his call for an anti-Whitlam alliance.' Snedden offered no comment.<sup>147</sup>

With his leadership hanging by a rapidly unravelling hair, and having made telling points against Snedden a few weeks before, almost any politician would have kept a low profile, but in early October Gair was criticising Snedden again:

*The DLP would have a far higher regard for the Liberals if they got themselves a leader who looked like the alternative Prime Minister. I make it clear that I have nothing personally against Mr Snedden, but he's simply not a leader.*

By this stage, however, it was the DLP who were more than fed up with their leader. One DLP source commented: 'We can't have our leader running around abusing the

---

<sup>146</sup> Peter Barron, 'Vince Might Be the Bloody Lightweight ... In His Own DLP', *Sunday Mail* 30 September 1973.

<sup>147</sup> Wallace Brown, 'Gair Stuns the Liberals', *Courier-Mail* 9 August 1973.

Liberal leader like that.’<sup>148</sup> It was the last straw. On 10 October 1973 Gair announced his resignation as party leader in the Senate. Uncharacteristically modest, as he bowed out from the leadership Gair chose to focus on the workloads of the Senator rather than on any specific achievement:

*[Under] the circumstances I believe that we have done a reasonably good job. We placed very high – this was almost our paramount objective – in our order of priorities the belief that we should conduct ourselves responsibly, with balance and common sense and at all times having regard to the welfare of Australia and its people.*

After Senator Lionel Murphy expressed the hope that the DLP would continue ‘to do to the official opposition what they used to do to us’, a couple of Gair’s opponents paid tribute to him. Senator Reg Withers said that unlike others he had never suffered from Gair’s ‘personal abrasiveness’ and that he was one of the best members of Parliament with whom to deal. Sir Kenneth Anderson, former President of the Senate said of Gair that ‘his word was his bond on behalf of his party.’ Senator Reg ‘Spot’ Turnbull, an independent Senator who had allied himself with the DLP on many occasions was the most fulsome in his praise.: ‘If we ever have had a grand old man of politics, we have him here now. His humour, his sense of justice, his very pertinent and pungent wit in interjections, I think, have put fear into members of this chamber.’

Turner’s next words were fraught with irony: he hoped the government would not arrange a double dissolution ‘so that we may continue to enjoy Vince Gair’s humour and attitudes in this Parliament.’ Turner also referred to the scrapping of imperial honours before Gair had had the chance to get recognition, but suggested facetiously that when the new honours system was implemented, ‘he will be the first to receive

---

<sup>148</sup> *Courier-Mail* 6 October 1973.



the Order of the Kangaroo. I hope he gets some recognition by the Commonwealth government.’<sup>149</sup>

The press was far less kind than Gair’s parliamentary colleagues. When a long-standing political figure steps down from an important position, the press generally marks the occasion with, at the very least, measured politeness for all but the most contentious and cantankerous of figures. But little such regard was shown to Gair, despite his being the longest serving politician in Australia.

One veteran journalist Alan Ramsey, had showed no mercy in a profile the month before:

*Though still alert and acid-tongued, he is in every sense a relic from another era, a wily political hustler ... sustained in his political activities by his hatred for the Labor party.*

---

<sup>149</sup> CPD Senate 10 October 1973, pp 1085-1086.

*[The Labor victory] has left him, squat figured as he hunches in his Senate seat glaring at his opponents on the government benches, looking and sounding no more than he is, an old man with old, tired ideas.*<sup>150</sup>

The *Australian's* portrayal of the old, cold warrior was little less than vicious:

*He always addressed the Senate in slow, ringing tones, his voice booming around the chamber and this same man whose party supported the slaughter in Vietnam would sing the praises of State aid to independent (meaning mainly religious) schools. Spread the gospel of love in anti- Communist, Christian Australia and drop another million tons of explosives on the Vietnamese.*<sup>151</sup>

The *Age* was brutally honest in an editorial marking his departure, in its assessment of Gair's past and his party's likely future:

*The abdication of Senator Gair is not exactly the rash gesture of a man turning his back on power and glory....Senator Gair, a tough, professional politician, has assiduously made the most of his party's small strength by exploiting the weaknesses of his allies' leaders. The pity is that the DLP has not had something more positive to offer the country.*<sup>152</sup>

The DLP did not mourn Gair's departure as leader either, and a later unpublished brief account of the party's history was scathing in its candour. 'During the 1972 election and more particularly following that election, our leadership became an embarrassment and led up to public ridicule and caused us to lose credibility until a change was made.' To the writer(s) of this document, Gair 'had been responsible to a large degree for our decline in image and appeal.'<sup>153</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

---

<sup>150</sup> *Australian* 5 September 1973.

<sup>151</sup> *Australian* 11 October 1973.

<sup>152</sup> *Age* 11 October 1973.

<sup>153</sup> Untitled typescript on the history of the DLP, in folder labeled 'Queensland Branch', located in DLP Papers, State Library of Victoria, MS 10389 B21.

In a kind gesture that was little noticed at the time, Prime Minister Whitlam allowed Gair to keep his black Commonwealth car.<sup>154</sup>

---

<sup>154</sup> Andrew Clark, 'Après le Gair comes the war', *National Times* 8-13 April 1974.

## **CHAPTER TEN - DECLINE, RETIREMENT AND DEATH**

*Forgive us our trespasses. Matthew 6:12.*

## 10.1 A SURPRISING JOB OFFER

After his resignation as DLP leader, Gair was a forlorn and lonely figure in Canberra, a marked change from his formerly gregarious and convivial self. When he stepped down one newspaper writer, looking through newspaper photographs of Gair back to the 1940s, remarked on how it was ‘difficult to find one where the roly-poly figure is not topped by an ear-to-ear grin.’<sup>1</sup> There was little evidence of any grin, ear-to-ear or otherwise, from the fallen old warrior in those difficult months between October 1973 and March 1974. For a time, he considered devoting some of his time to a charity in an honorary capacity<sup>2</sup> but despite these benevolent thoughts, by most accounts he was not pleasant to be around. His new leader McManus said of this dark period: ‘Gair did everything he possibly could to make things unpleasant and difficult for everybody. We used to sit down at the dining table and he’d insult everybody ... he’d glare and then he’d start to abuse somebody.’<sup>3</sup> Gair in full vitriolic flight would not have been a pleasant experience even for veteran politicians. Bill Hayden recalled years after Gair’s death that ‘If you stood on the wrong side of some javelin of political contumely unleashed by the late Vince Gair, you had been impaled by an expert.’<sup>4</sup>

His fellow Senator Jim McClelland recalled a ‘morose and lonely’ Gair. ‘He used to sit on the DLP crossbenches, quite close to me, and, especially at night, as he became increasingly lubricated, I could hear him muttering more or less to himself to the great

---

<sup>1</sup> ‘Gair: Never A Dunce’, *Courier-Mail* 11 October 1973.

<sup>2</sup> *Canberra Times* 3 April 1974.

<sup>3</sup> Frank McManus, Interview, ORAL TRC 121/72, National Library of Australia, pp 96-97.

<sup>4</sup> Bill Hayden, ‘Demons and Democrats – Re-evaluating Disastrous Splits’, *News Weekly* 12 January 2002.

embarrassment of his strait-laced colleagues seated around him.’<sup>5</sup> Senator Jack Kane was a little kinder in his comments on Gair at this juncture, simply recalling that ‘at that stage you usually rang Vince in the afternoons or in the mornings, for good reasons.’<sup>6</sup> Senator Kenneth Anderson, formerly leader of the government in the Senate said: ‘The Senator Gair we saw at the finish ... was a very different man – I’m talking now in terms of political judgments – that what he was during the time that my party was in power, and I felt very sad about him at the finish.’<sup>7</sup>

An incident just before Christmas underlined Gair’s discontent with his colleagues, and, perhaps, with the state of politicians in general. Gair accused the other DLP Senators of helping the government to rush through legislation so that they could all attend the screening of a sex education film. He claimed that the senators who attended the film had ‘sewer minds.’ The claim was a curious one: the screening was at the National Library and was presumably more of an educational rather than a titillating nature. McManus denied the allegations anyway, saying that at the time of the screening, Gair, Kane and Byrne were flying home and that he, McManus and Little were at dinner.<sup>8</sup>

The idea that Gair’s discontent might be turned to the advantage of the government had its genesis at a New Year’s Eve party at the Ocean View restaurant on the Coolangatta-Tweed Heads border. John, Tom and Vince Hogan hosted the party. John Planter’ Hogan was a land developer and fringe ALP figure. Mick Young, national ALP secretary and Whitlam staffer, and Whitlam’s press secretary Eric Walsh were

---

<sup>5</sup> James McClelland, *Stirring the possum*, Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1989, p 144.

<sup>6</sup> Jack Kane, Interview, ORAL TRC 4900/46, National Library of Australia, p 17:18.

<sup>7</sup> Sir Kenneth Anderson, Interview, ORAL TRC 121/90, National Library of Australia, p. 3:1/17.

<sup>8</sup> *Age* 14 and 15 December 1973.

there, and it was on this social occasion that the idea of offering Gair a diplomatic position was first breached, initially in jest, but later in earnest.

John Hogan's family had known the Sextons, the family of Nell Gair, a Tweed native, for over a generation. He and Walsh were schoolfellows in northern New South Wales. It would later be postulated that Hogan 'felt out' Gair's attitudes towards an early retirement. Vince Hogan confirmed his belief that Gair, despite nearly his two decades of venality and vituperations against it, was a Labor party man at heart. 'It was thought', Hogan recalled, 'that Gair might do something for the Labor party before he finished, but the question of an ambassadorship was not discussed in my presence.'<sup>9</sup>

The possibility of offering Gair something in return for his support, or rather, lack of condemnation, had previously occurred to the coalition government in early 1972. One story doing the Canberra rounds was that Gair would be offered a knighthood if he and his party would soften their criticism of the by then terminally ailing government. At the time Liberal MHR and Defence Minister Jim Killen said elliptically that 'the story has taunting touches of versimilitude.' He hastened to add that to make an offer such as that would be:

*[T]o mistake greatly the character of Senator Gair. Whatever faults Senator Gair's enemies and friends may say he has, it is hard to put weakness among them... To think that a man with Senator Gair's background could be enticed into pliant political agreement by the prospect of being known as Sir Vincent is to show a curious indifference to the origins and policies of the DLP.<sup>10</sup>*

---

<sup>9</sup> Andrew Clark, 'Après le Gair comes the war', *National Times* 8-13 April 1974.

<sup>10</sup> D J Killen, 'Arise, Sir Vincent' Not Enough to Soften Up V Gair', *National Times* February 7-12, 1972.

But for Gair, times had changed in two crucial ways. With the election of the Labor government his party had lost relevance, and he had lost the leadership. Gair was lonely, Gair was disappointed, Gair was bitter, but perhaps most of all, Gair was tired.

A few weeks after the party at the Hogans, Gair, sick of the company of his fellow DLP Senators, began to re-establish personal relationships with men he had not spoken to for years. One was ALP Senator Justin O'Byrne. Before the Senate rose for Christmas, O'Byrne and Gair had their first conversation for a long time about an operation that Gair was to have on his hand for a painful medical condition from which O'Byrne also suffered. O'Byrne had experienced those operations, and informally briefed Gair on the subject. In the course of these conversations, or perhaps subsequent conversations in the New Year, Gair told O'Byrne he was contemplating early retirement.

Gair stated in the *Courier-Mail* of 3 April 1974: 'I told him [O'Byrne] that if there was a double dissolution I would not stand, and if there was not a double dissolution I would not be completing the remaining three years of my term.' On 5 March, the Senate elected its chairman of committees. Gair told O'Byrne that he had voted for him as chairman, but that his colleagues in the DLP had voted for another senator, one who Gair saw as against DLP interests. His disdain for his DLP colleagues was explicit, and he told O'Byrne that they were 'a bunch of drongoes.' After hearing Gair vent his spleen against his comrades, O'Byrne seized the opportunity to say to him: 'You know, they have kicked you into the back benches. They have given you a



pretty rough trot. Why do not you and Mrs Gair go for a holiday?’<sup>11</sup> According to Whitlam confidant and speechwriter Graham Freudenberg, it was on 5 March that Gair indicated he would be interested in accepting an diplomatic post from the Labor government.<sup>12</sup> It is not surprising that Gair’s last major political decision was a pragmatic one. A few years later he admitted he took the ambassadorship because he knew that the DLP could not survive.<sup>13</sup>

O’Byrne passed the substance of these conversations on to Lionel Murphy, who in turn told Whitlam. Whitlam authorised Murphy and O’Byrne to ascertain if Gair would retire early if offered a diplomatic post. Gair indicated that he was receptive to the idea, but when Foreign Affairs Minister Don Willesee got wind of the plan, he warned against it, telling Murphy and Whitlam that the scheme was morally distasteful and could be politically dangerous. ‘Forget about Gair’, he advised Whitlam.<sup>14</sup> When Labor party veteran Fred Daly heard of the plan, he was ‘amazed’, and said to Willesee: ‘You are not going to buy that ratbag scheme, are you?’ Willesee replied, ‘Certainly not, but the Prime Minister is determined to go along with it.’<sup>15</sup> Daly would later recall the Gair Affair as ‘a great plan executed in a disastrous way ... they were dealing with one of the trickiest old customers ever to enter the Federal parliament and he did them all like a dinner.’<sup>16</sup>

A few years later, in his account of the 1975 constitutional crisis, *The truth of the matter*, Whitlam would recall blandly that after the government learnt of Gair’s wish

---

<sup>11</sup> CPD Senate 8 April 1974 pp 729-730.

<sup>12</sup> Graham Freudenberg, *A certain grandeur: Gough Whitlam in politics*, Melbourne: Sun, 1978, p 290.

<sup>13</sup> Tony Blackie, ‘At 78, Vincent Gair Still Has a Lot to Say’, *Sun-Herald* 6 May 1979.

<sup>14</sup> Alan Reid, *The Whitlam Venture*, Melbourne: Hill of Content, pp 102-103.

<sup>15</sup> Fred Daly, *From Curtin to Kerr*, Melbourne: Sun, 1977, p 201.

<sup>16</sup> Fred Daly, Interview, ORAL TRC 4900/63, pp 13:30-31, National Library of Australia.

to retire: 'We thought it more appropriate for Senator Gair's successor to be elected by the electors of Queensland at the forthcoming Senate election than chosen by the Parliament of Queensland a little later. We offered him and he accepted the ambassadorship to Ireland.'<sup>17</sup> The almost languid account fooled no one, least of all historian Fred Alexander who termed it 'one of the least convincing arguments in that polemical defence of his administration.'<sup>18</sup>

At a press conference on 2 April Laurie Oakes asked Whitlam: 'Did you appoint Senator Gair because of his tact, diplomacy and agreement with your government's policies, or so you could win another Senate seat in Queensland?' Whitlam was truthful, if not totally forthcoming with his answer: 'I would agree with what Mr Snedden said about Senator Gair on the 4<sup>th</sup> October. "Senator Gair is a very experienced and very senior politician. He has, in fact, been a very great Australian." My attitude to Senator Gair has always been the same.'<sup>19</sup>

Omitted from Whitlam's comments, of course, was the strong belief that if the electors of Queensland chose Gair's successor at a half-Senate election, the successor would most likely be a representative of the Labor party, while the Parliament of Queensland was not likely to choose someone from Labor to replace Gair. Whitlam did not elaborate on why he or his government thought it was 'more appropriate' for

---

<sup>17</sup> Gough Whitlam, *The truth of the matter*, Ringwood, Vic: Penguin, 1979, p 10.

<sup>18</sup> Fred Alexander, *Australia since Federation: a narrative and critical analysis*, Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1982, p 335.

<sup>19</sup> Whitlam, Gough. 'Prime Ministers Press Conference Parliament House Canberra Tuesday, 2 April 1974.' This item was available through the website of the Whitlam Institute at the University of Western Sydney. The basic website address is <http://bancroft.uws.edu.au>. Accessed 8 January 2007. Gair's attitude to Whitlam had been similarly consistent. On one occasion he had allegedly denounced Whitlam in the Parliamentary bar as 'a political Liberace playing to the gallery.' In 1969 he summed up Opposition leader Whitlam's policy speech in just eight words: 'As shiny as quicksilver, and just as slippery.' See Douglas Wilkie, 'Godless Gough, Godly Gair', *Advertiser* (Adelaide) 3 April 1974: 'Whitlam's Quicksilver Policy: Shiny, and Just as Slippery', *News Weekly*, 8 October 1969.

Gair to be replaced at a half-Senate election rather than by casual vacancy later, although no one could doubt that it was more favourable to them in political terms – or so they thought. On 2 April, Gair would say of Whitlam: ‘I hope that his real motive was clean and good.’<sup>20</sup> It would be only a couple of years before Fred Daly would admit, to almost no one’s surprise, that Whitlam had appointed Gair to the post in order to smash the DLP and give the Labor party a chance to win an extra seat in the Senate.<sup>21</sup> In 1997 Whitlam would briefly allude to the Gair appointment, and apparently take the blame for the fiasco, veiling the admission slightly by expressing it in Latin: ‘Mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.’<sup>22</sup>

Whitlam had waited until Willesee was out of the country to, as Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, formally offer Gair the post of Australian Ambassador to Ireland. The offer came on 12 March. Gair asked Whitlam: ‘Why did you offer it to me? After all, I have been instrumental in keeping you out of office for years.’ Whitlam told Gair it was because of his experience. But as Gair recalled later: ‘I knew that wasn’t the reason.’<sup>23</sup>

After talking it over with Nell Gair, Gair accepted the post the next day. He would later say on television: ‘I wanted to get something for myself after 40 years in public life. I wanted to be able to get something that my wife could enjoy after the years of deprivation of my company because of public life.’<sup>24</sup> In financial terms, Gair himself

---

<sup>20</sup> *Courier-Mail* 3 April 1974.

<sup>21</sup> *Herald* (Melbourne) 17 and 24 March 1976.

<sup>22</sup> Gough Whitlam, Speeches and Statements, University of Queensland Law Society Dinner, Hilton International, Brisbane 25 October 1997. Internet reference <http://whitlam.alp.org.au/qldlaw.html>. Accessed 22 December 2004. The Latin phrases are from the Mass of the Roman Catholic Church and, literally translated, mean ‘My fault, my most [grievous] fault.’

<sup>23</sup> Tony Blackie, ‘At 78, Vincent Gair Still Has a Lot to Say’, *Sun-Herald* 6 May 1979.

<sup>24</sup> *CPD* Senate 8 April 1974, p 730.

had a motive for accepting the post. His salary as a Senator was \$14 500 a year, with an electoral allowance of \$4 100, but, reportedly, his ambassadorial salary was likely to be about \$23 000.<sup>25</sup>

Whitlam kept the offer secret, even from his own staff. He chose not to work through the head of the Prime Minister's department, Sir John Bunting, but negotiated directly with an official of the Department of Foreign Affairs. Whitlam kept no copies of the relevant documentation in his office, and his signing of them was not recorded: he hand-delivered some of the papers to the department personally and on foot.

On 14 March, without indicating a reason for his visit to his staff, Whitlam visited the Governor General, Sir Paul Hasluck, with a letter advising of the government's wish to appoint Gair as Ambassador to Ireland. The letter included a very brief recapping of Gair's career (oddly, including the detail that he had been married since 1944) and concluded with the bland statement that: 'The government considers that Mr Gair is well suited to the position of Ambassador to the Republic of Ireland, and I recommend that you approve his appointment.'<sup>26</sup>

Hasluck, on whose head Whitlam had once dashed a glass of water during a fiery House of Representatives debate, read the letter, and on it wrote 'Approved', along with his signature and the date.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> *Courier-Mail* 3 April 1974.

<sup>26</sup> Whitlam to Hasluck, 14 March 1974. Whitlam Papers Series M522/0, Item G1. Senator Gair's Appointment. National Archives of Australia.

<sup>27</sup> Laurie Oakes and David Solomon, *Grab for Power: Election '74*, p 12; James Walter, *The leader: a political biography of Gough Whitlam*, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980, p 250.

The Executive Council approved Gair's appointment on 21 March 1974, the appointment to commence from a date to be determined by the Foreign Affairs Minister. On the same day, Whitlam announced to the House of Representatives that a half-Senate election would be held on 18 May.<sup>28</sup>

## 10.2 GOUGH WHITLAM'S MATHEMATICAL MOTIVE

There were pragmatic, political and mathematical reasons for Whitlam wanting Gair out of the way. In the forthcoming Senate elections, under the quota system, it was extremely unlikely that the ALP could win three out of the five seats scheduled to fall vacant in Queensland. However, if six seats were available, the mathematics was different. Under the *Commonwealth Electoral Act 1948*, the quota for election of one member was obtained by dividing the number of formal first preference votes by the number of vacancies to be filled plus one, and then adding one to the result thus obtained. In a situation where five vacancies needed to be filled, the percentage of first preference votes needed to elect a Senator was 16.67 percent (one-sixth), so to elect three, the ALP needed to attain 50 percent of the votes. But in a situation where six vacancies needed to be filled, the percentage of first preference votes needed to elect a Senator was 14.3 percent (one-seventh), so to elect three, the ALP needed to obtain 42.9 percent of the votes. The first figure looked almost impossible, but the second one was, on the basis of past history, easily obtainable.<sup>29</sup>

The possibility and implications of the ALP receiving a crucial advantage by means of a casual vacancy had been aired in public on a couple of occasions. In January

---

<sup>28</sup> Reid, Alan. *The Whitlam venture*. Melbourne: Hill of Content, 1976, p 103.

<sup>29</sup> The figures, 14.3 and 16.67 are of course approximate, as neither seven nor six go evenly into 100 to form a percentage. The ALP had polled better than 42.9 percent in every Senate election after 1961, when they polled 42.25 percent, but had not polled over 50 percent since 1943. As it turned out, the ALP polled 43.7 percent of first preference votes in Queensland in the 1974 election.

1973 Dr Dick Klugman, a New South Wales Labor MHR wrote in a letter to the *Australian* on the ALP's forthcoming prospects in the Senate, noting that 'The ALP position could be improved by 'promoting' non-ALP senators (not due to retire in 1974) to become judges, governors, administrators, ambassadors, etc.' In June 1973, Liberal MHR Bill Wentworth made the same observation, noting that the ALP government was unlikely to win a majority unless casual vacancies occurred 'either through the death or resignation of a senator, or through the engineered resignation of a senator.' With both perception and prescience, Wentworth went on:

*It could be vital if the Labor Party could engineer, before the Senate election, a casual vacancy for a long-term non-Labor Senator from either Queensland or Western Australia, which are the two vital states, because these are the states where with five vacancies the split would be likely to be three to two against Labor, but with six vacancies the split would be likely to be three all ... I am ready to bet that the Labor Party will be making desperate efforts to engineer casual vacancies among the long-term non-Labor senators from those two states.*<sup>30</sup>

The government decided to keep the news of the Gair appointment under wraps for a couple of weeks after the 21 March Executive Council meeting. Whitlam believed Gair's appointment should be announced in Parliament when it resumed on 2 April. The delay would be a fateful one.

### **10.3 TUMULTUOUS REACTION**

Appropriately, the press got wind of the appointment on 1 April, following a leak to Melbourne *Sun* political reporter, John Lombard that a diplomatic appointment to a politician was in the wind. Lombard, and later Laurie Oakes checked with various sources, and Oakes was told that the appointment was 'big, big, big'. He picked up

---

<sup>30</sup> Laurie Oakes and David Solomon, *Grab for power: election '74*, Melbourne: Cheshire, 1974, pp 9-10.

hints pointing to Queensland and to Gair, and called Gair's home in Brisbane. He spoke to Nell Gair, and offered congratulations for the important government appointment that he (Oakes) understood Gair had been given. Unsuspecting, Nell Gair thanked him.<sup>31</sup>

The story broke on 2 April in the Melbourne *Sun* the next day. That day, when questioned about the appointment in the House Whitlam said: 'I hope Mr and Mrs Gair will be able to welcome me to Dublin next July.' Liberal Opposition leader Billy Snedden, in a burst of indignant hyperbole, described the appointment as 'the most shameful act by any government in Australia's history.'<sup>32</sup> He later described it as 'the lowest action any government could commit.'<sup>33</sup>

Others were similarly scathing. Conservative columnist David McNicoll, no fan of Labor anyway, wanted to know 'How can we talk about attracting the 'right types' to politics when things like the Gair affair happen?'<sup>34</sup> 'The unplumbed depths of political cynicism have now been thoroughly plumbed', fumed the *Age* in its editorial of 3 April. 'The idea that the senator might be of diplomatic calibre is a novel one.' Years later, Joh Bjelke-Petersen agreed: 'Vince Gair was probably the last person Whitlam would ordinarily have given the job to.'<sup>35</sup>

Overseas appointments to political rivals were not new, but Sir Robert Menzies was reportedly 'seething' over the comparisons made in some newspapers between the

---

<sup>31</sup> Laurie Oakes and David Solomon, *Grab for power: election '74*, Melbourne: Cheshire 1974, pp 1-3.

<sup>32</sup> CPD House of Representatives 2 April 1974, pp 804-805.

<sup>33</sup> Laurie Oakes and David Solomon, *Grab for power: election '74*, p 15.

<sup>34</sup> *Bulletin* 13 April 1974.

<sup>35</sup> Joh Bjelke-Petersen, *Don't you worry about that!: the Joh Bjelke-Petersen memoirs*. North Ryde, NSW: Collins/Angus and Robertson, 1990, p 108.

Gair appointment and his appointments of Sir Percy Spender and Lord Casey, prominent members of his own party, to Washington.<sup>36</sup> He had some reason to be upset. While these men and others were, as the *Australian* noted ‘cynically removed from politics because they were in Sir Robert’s way’, there was a difference, because the stakes and the potential reward – control of the Senate – were much higher.<sup>37</sup>

Interviewed for television, Gair and his wife – who, as the ‘minister for home affairs’, had been consulted by her husband over the job offer, were both cheerful and unrepentant. Nell Gair had once said of her husband: ‘One thing you can be sure of, he won’t tackle anything that’s beyond him.’<sup>38</sup> One admiring telephone caller told Nell Gair that ‘it was a great ending for a great man.’ Gair declared: ‘I’ve ratted on nobody.’<sup>39</sup> In another interview he said ‘I resent very strongly any suggestion that I am a Judas to anybody.’<sup>40</sup>

The same morning, Gair met with his DLP colleagues and confirmed the story, saying that it was far too late for him to change his mind. ‘I think I’m committed.’ He did, however, affirm that he would vote with his colleagues and against the government on the proposed *Superior Court Bill*. When the meeting broke up, Jack Kane followed Gair to his room and tried to talk him out of it, reminding him of the government pension to which he was entitled, and of the recent suggestion that the Russians had

---

<sup>36</sup> *Bulletin* 13 April 1974. Menzies told David McNicoll: ‘If I were not 79 I would have a writ in to him [Douglas Wilkie of the *Sun Pictorial*, who had claimed that Menzies got rid of Casey and Spender because they got in his way] tomorrow morning, but I am not going to devote the remaining couple of years of my life to litigation.’ David McNicoll, *Luck’s a fortune: an autobiography*. Sydney: Wildcat Press, 1979, p 219.

<sup>37</sup> ‘Whitlam Tries to Win Control by Stealth’, *Australian* 3 April 1974.

<sup>38</sup> *Courier-Mail* 25 November 1970.

<sup>39</sup> ‘Senator Vince Gair Interviewed’, Sydney: ABC, 1975. Audiocassette, Fryer Library, University of Queensland. The interview was held in early April 1974 for the *This Day Tonight* television program. The interviewer was Richard Carleton.

<sup>40</sup> *Canberra Times* 3 April 1974.



secretly suggested the establishment of a joint radio communications facility in Australia. But even talk of Russian bases on Australian soil did not sway the once implacable cold warrior from a decision that he knew could help hand Labor control of the Senate. Gair told Kane there was nothing he could do. McManus now met with Gair, suggesting that Gair wait until the half-Senate election to resign. Gair replied, tellingly: 'Whitlam told me I wouldn't get the job unless I resigned in circumstances which would create an extra vacancy.'<sup>41</sup> McManus told him 'I've got two sons, the same as you, and I'd hate to have the things said about me to my sons which are going to be said to your sons about you.' Gair replied: 'They'll have to put up with it.'<sup>42</sup> In the manner of a one-man Greek chorus, Peter Samuel of the *Bulletin* later grasped the tragic implications of what had happened: 'The greatest warrior of this party of principle that had sacrificed so much for the sake of its beliefs had been bought off by their deadliest enemy.'<sup>43</sup>

Gair, however, seemed curiously reluctant to resign. Once more, his penchant for political procrastination, pronounced during the 1957 split and recently evidenced in the long saga associated with his resignation of the DLP parliamentary leadership, seemed to be emerging, but this time there are all the signs that the old warrior knew exactly what he was doing. At first, he appeared to set his mind on attending the DLP party meeting of 3 April before resigning from the Senate. It could not have been a meeting that anyone would have wished to attend: his four estranged colleagues expelled him from the parliamentary party. The wording of the resolution that once more expelled Gair from a Labor party for the second time in just under seventeen years ran:

---

<sup>41</sup> Laurie Oakes and David Solomon, *Grab for power: election '74*, Melbourne: Cheshire 1974, p 19

<sup>42</sup> Frank McManus, Interview, ORAL TRC 121/72, pp 98-99, National Library of Australia.

<sup>43</sup> Peter Samuel, 'The demise of the dogged DLP', *Bulletin* 1 June 1974.

*In view of Senator Gair's action in surrendering a DLP seat in the Senate without consultation with either his Parliamentary colleagues or the Party, and noting that his action advantages another political group, he be informed that as of this date he is no longer regarded as a member of the Parliamentary Democratic Labor Party.*<sup>44</sup>

There is little evidence that by this stage Gair cared anything about being estranged from his colleagues. 'They have been clamouring for a younger man for years. I can't go on like the brook. If they want a younger man to carry the load of the party, they now have their chance.' Expulsion from the DLP parliamentary party did not worry him either: 'How can they expel me when I'm no longer a senator? I have no right to enter that place now.'<sup>45</sup>

#### **10. 4 A SURFEIT OF PRAWNS**

Gair's apparent reluctance to resign, along with a certain reticence in interviews published on Tuesday 2 April alerted Attorney-General Lionel Murphy to the possibility that Gair might try to take the ambassadorship and try to delay his resignation until after the half-Senate election, thus stopping Labor from gaining an extra seat. Murphy closely examined the legal position, but was reassured by Section 44 (iv) of the Constitution which forbade a Senator from holding an office of profit under the Crown, and Section 45 (iii) which declared that a senator's place becomes vacant if the senator directly or indirectly 'takes or agrees to take any fee or honorarium for services rendered to the Commonwealth.' In Murphy's view, Gair had ceased to be a senator either when appointed Ambassador to Ireland on 14 March, or on 20 March when the Irish government had agreed to the appointment. Any delays

---

<sup>44</sup> F P McManus, Press Release, 'DLP Party Meeting' 3 April 1974. State Library of Victoria, DLP Papers, MS 10389, C/1/10.

<sup>45</sup> *Age* 4 April 1974.

from Gair could be countered with the constitutional argument that Gair had automatically vacated his Senate place by accepting a government post.<sup>46</sup>

However, Gair had made this point of view difficult to maintain by, as Senator John Carrick noted on 8 April, attending all sitting days from 14 March to 2 April, voting in nine divisions, speaking on a constitutional matter and voting at approximately 10 pm on 2 April when, as Carrick said to President Magnus Cormack: '[Y]ou, Mr President, were in the chair and were freely available to him should he have desired to convey to you a message of resignation. So, by that action Senator Gair purported to be a senator and nobody challenged that.' Gair had also accepted his salary, allowances, emoluments and travel allowances since 14 March and on the evening of 2 April used the travel warrant provisions of Parliament to fly home from Canberra to Brisbane.<sup>47</sup>

There was another difficulty. During March, and indeed up to 30 April, another person, Keith Brennan, occupied the office of Ambassador to Ireland. The editor of the *Australian Law Journal* suggested that diplomatic practice 'which seems implicitly to recognise only the possibility of one single Head of Mission to represent a single country' made it doubtful that Gair held an office of profit under the Crown (that is, the ambassadorship) at the relevant time. It was relevant to ask whether the acceptance of the post had compromised Gair's independence and integrity as a member of Parliament.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Laurie Oakes and David Solomon, *Grab for power: election '74*. Melbourne: Cheshire 1974, pp 20-21.

<sup>47</sup> CPD Senate 8 April 1974, p 733.

<sup>48</sup> P J Hanks, 'Parliamentarians and the Electorate' in Gareth Evans, ed., *Labor and the constitution 1972-1975: essays and commentaries on the constitutional controversies of the Whitlam years in Australian government*, Melbourne: Heinemann, 1977, pp 192-193.

No one could argue that Gair had not considered himself a Senator up until 3 April. Even Whitlam had said so at a press conference on 2 April. When asked if Gair had accepted the ambassadorial position, Whitlam responded: “Yes. He has not, I understand, resigned from the Senate yet.”<sup>49</sup>

2 April 1974, the day when the appointment was first publicly disclosed, would be a crucial day. While the first reaction from the Opposition was a combination of outrage and righteous indignation, the more thoughtful heads among them were pondering the possibilities. In Queensland, Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen met with his staff briefly to discuss the possibility of countering what appeared to be a political masterstroke. No one offered any ideas.

At lunchtime, Senator Ian Wood, a close friend of Bjelke-Petersen, rang the premier to inform him that Gair had not resigned from the Senate, and that this might be something that could be exploited. Wood was not a lawyer, but had a more than fair grasp of the constitution and discussed his idea with several other Senators, including Senators Peter Durack and Elliot Lillico.<sup>50</sup> According to the *Sun Herald* of 7 April 1974, Wood had been in consultation with J R Odgers, Clerk of the Senate and the author of a book on Senate procedures. By virtue of his position, Odgers was obliged

---

<sup>49</sup> Unless otherwise specified with a footnote, most of the subsequent narrative is drawn from the most comprehensive account of the Gair affair, that contained in Laurie Oakes and David Solomon, *Grab for power: election '74*, pp 1-29.

<sup>50</sup> Russell Schneider, ‘The Wooing of Vince’, *Sunday Telegraph* 7 April 1974. Although this and many later accounts credited Wood with the original idea, when Bjelke-Petersen was asked whose idea it was to block the Labor party from controlling the Senate, he answered: ‘Mine, of course.’ However, in Bjelke-Petersen’s 1990 memoirs, *Don’t you worry about that!*, he accorded Wood some credit for the plan. See ‘“Whitlam Blocked” – Gair Row’, *Herald* (Melbourne), 3 April 1974; Joh Bjelke-Petersen, *Don’t you worry about that!*, pp108-109. Wood left a handwritten account of the Gair Affair in his papers at the James Cook University Library Archives, Townsville, reference number SIW/PEERSONAL/3. The account was partially reprinted in *The Ithaca Newsletter*, vol 12 no 5, 22 May 1974, a publication of the Combined Ithaca Branches of the Liberal Party of Australia, Queensland Division. A copy of this edition of the newsletter is in Wood’s papers.

to give impartial and confidential advice to all Senators. When Wood told him what he was going to do, Odgers said 'It would be a bit rough to take such action', Wood replied: 'Mr Odgers, you meet roughness with roughness.'<sup>51</sup>

With Wood's phone call, Bjelke-Petersen decided to immediately issue Senate election writs for the vacancies in Queensland – but only for five of them. Despite advice to the contrary, notably from Crown Law, who cautioned the Queensland premier that the issuing of writs might disenfranchise all Queensland senators for the rest of the Parliamentary session, Bjelke-Petersen was determined to go ahead with 'his' plan. By his own account, he proceeded despite advice that what he wanted to do was legally impossible, but:

*I was determined to press ahead with my plan, no matter what the legal experts said. So I told them: 'Let's stop arguing about it. I want to do it and I'm going to do it. So let's get on with it.'*<sup>52</sup>

The reasoning of Wood and Bjelke-Petersen was based on a 1907 High Court ruling that an election began after the issuing of the writs, not after the start of the polling. In the case of *Vardon v O'Loghlin*, the High Court held, in interpreting Section 13 of the Constitution, that 'election' does 'not mean the day of nomination or the polling day alone, but comprises the whole proceedings from the issue of the writ to the valid return.'<sup>53</sup> Therefore, if writs were issued before Gair resigned, his place would not be vacant until after the half-Senate election was underway, and the election of a successor was not necessary until the next House of Representatives election.

---

<sup>51</sup> *Ithaca Newsletter* vol 12 no 5, 22 May 1974. Copy in Senator Ian Wood papers, James Cook University Library Archives, Townsville.

<sup>52</sup> Joh Bjelke-Petersen, *Don't you worry about that!* p 109.

<sup>53</sup> This decision was recorded in *Commonwealth Law Reports*, vol 5, p 201ff. For an online version, see <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/cth/HCA/1907/69.html> Accessed 4 February 2007.

Moreover, his place could be filled by someone nominated by the Queensland government until the next lower house election. Precedents abounded. As recently as 1969, election writs had been issued on 29 September, but Senator S H Cohen of Victoria had died on 7 October. His replacement was not a matter for the general electorate. Instead, a new senator was chosen by the Parliament of Victoria on 19 November, after the general election of 25 October. Parliaments in South Australia (1967) and Victoria and Western Australia (1964) had chosen new senators in similar circumstances.<sup>54</sup>

At the behest of Bjelke-Petersen, Crown Law officers and other officials started to prepare the necessary legal documents. Meanwhile in Canberra, as the Opposition raged and fumed at the government's duplicity, one of their number, Wood was, in his words, 'walking on tip toes through the tulips in case anyone should know what I was doing.' In the afternoon, the Liberal Senator went into the chamber, where Gair looked over towards him. Wood gave him a wink, and Gair winked back. Wood recalled: 'Little did he know what my wink meant, that I was on the job.'<sup>55</sup>

Back in Brisbane, spurred by Wood's advice, Bjelke-Petersen issued instructions for the printing of a special *Queensland Government Gazette* that afternoon, to announce the issuing of the writs. Bjelke-Petersen's afternoon was a busy one. To get through the legal paperwork, obtain the necessary signatures and get the announcement printed in the gazette by six in the evening was logistically difficult, even without the necessity for secrecy. The premier contacted all his cabinet ministers, who filed into his office a few at a time on a rostered system to sign what must have seemed

---

<sup>54</sup> J R Odgers, *Australian Senate practice*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1976, pp 111-112.

<sup>55</sup> *Ithaca Newsletter* vol 12 no 5, 22 May 1974.

innumerable documents. A quorum of six ministers had to be maintained at all times in Bjelke-Petersen's secret operations centre. Finally, with all the documents signed the writs were rushed to Government House, and back again to the government printer in the city, where they were duly printed before six pm. Whitlam's plan had been thwarted.

Meanwhile in Canberra, Gair continued to sit in the Senate chamber. At several points during the proceedings Murphy went over to Gair and said: 'What are you doing here, Vince? You must realise that your resignation is effective already.' Curiously, or perhaps not so curiously, Murphy had not pressed the point on Gair during the previous sitting days of 19, 20 and 21 March when Gair's resignation would also have been effective. That afternoon (that is, on 2 April) Gair's erstwhile colleague Senator Frank McManus had asked the President of the Senate if Gair was still a Senator. Sir Magnus Cormack replied: 'Until the honourable Senator delivers a letter of resignation into my hands, he is a member of the Senate.' Murphy, however, counter-claimed that Gair had vacated his seat when he had accepted the position of ambassador. At 3.47 pm a letter from Gair had reached the President, but it was not a letter of resignation, but, as Sir Magnus Cormack later expressed it, 'a notification that the effect of his appointment as Ambassador to Ireland was to vacate his place as a Senator.' As the letter was read out in the Senate, McManus called out to Murphy: 'You wrote it well, Lionel.' Murphy nodded his head.

Somehow, word of Bjelke-Petersen's machinations in Queensland filtered through to some coalition MPs, and even to a few journalists. It was already too late, but Labor tried to secure Gair's resignation. Fred Daly recalled how Eric Walsh was told to find

Gair and insist on his resignation going to the President of the Senate that night. Walsh 'shot out of the place like a train', and found Gair in his office around 9 pm. Gair promised Walsh that a typed resignation would be given to the President of the Senate, Sir Magnus Cormack, immediately, but when he returned at 10:40 pm, Gair had left his office. Daly recalled 'Crafty old Vince Gair – purposely, I would say – made sure that he couldn't be found in time to resign.' A parliamentary attendant told Walsh he had seen Gair going in to the office of a Queensland Country Party Senator, Ron Maunsell. Walsh could not barge uninvited into Maunsell's office, but met a mutual friend of his (Walsh's) and Gair's – none other than John 'The Planter' Hogan. Hogan, who happened to be visiting Canberra that day, agreed to take a message to Gair in Maunsell's office.

Hogan found Gair cheerfully consuming beer and prawns with Maunsell and several other Country Party parliamentarians. Bjelke-Petersen had contacted Maunsell, a friend of Gair's, during the afternoon, and asked him to keep Gair busy. When Hogan told Gair Walsh was looking for him, Gair said: 'Tell Eric it's all fixed.' When Walsh heard that he felt reassured, thinking that the resignation had been submitted. He did not find out until the next morning that not only had Gair not resigned, he had later put the matter beyond doubt by going into the Senate again and voting on a division on the *Petroleum and Minerals Authority Bill*. Clearly, he still considered himself a Senator. (Under section 46 of the Constitution, Gair could have been liable to pay \$200 for every day he had sat in the chamber while not a Senator to any person who sued for it in a court of competent jurisdiction, but no one ever followed up this option.) Gair later told Walsh that he had twice tried to leave his resignation in Cormack's office, but on each occasion Sir Magnus had been unavailable. It



apparently did not occur to him to simply leave the resignation letter with Sir Magnus's secretary. When Walsh asked Gair why he had voted in a division, Gair replied guilelessly: 'Loyalty got the better of me.'<sup>56</sup>

Although the beer and prawns had been laid on as a tactic to delay Gair, there is little room for doubt that he knew exactly what was going on, and he was irritated by the public perception that he had been outfoxed by the Country Party. The state secretary of the DLP in Victoria, Frank Dowling, said in a press release: 'I am surprised Senator Gair didn't see through it.'<sup>57</sup> 'Rot and rubbish!', Gair snorted to one reporter. 'Beer and prawns! Do you think I am not as astute as anyone in Parliament? I have been represented in the media as a sort of old idiot. I was only in Maunsell's office for half an hour ...I knew when I intended to put my resignation in.'<sup>58</sup> Years later, Joh Bjelke-Petersen reminisced: 'Frankly, I don't think there was ever much chance of Gair resigning that day. He was in a mood to be difficult at that time ... Knowing Vince Gair as I did, I don't think in that state of mind he would have allowed himself to be rushed into anything.'<sup>59</sup>

Most believed that Gair, the most senior parliamentarian in Australia, and someone who had demonstrated political sagacity for decades, could not have been

---

<sup>56</sup> Chiefly David Solomon and Laurie Oakes, *Grab for power: election '74*, pp 1-29: CPD Senate 2 April 1974. Also see 'The Gair Affair', DLP Papers, MS 10389, C/1/10, State Library of Victoria: Fred Daly, Interview, ORAL TRC 4900/63, 13:30, National Library of Australia: Richard Ackland, 'Gough Whitlam's Irish Problem' *Australian Financial Review* 4 April 1974 for Murphy asking Gair why he was still in the Senate seat: Geoffrey Caine and Leo Moses Wassercug, 'Timing Holds the Key to the Gair Affair', *Sydney morning herald* 4 April 1974 for the explanation of the significance of Vardon vs O'Loughlin. For Bjelke-Petersen's manipulations in Queensland, see Hugh Lunn, *Johannes Bjelke-Petersen: a political biography*, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1984, ch 12, 'The Gair Affair.'

<sup>57</sup> 'Press Statement by Frank Dowling, DLP State Secretary, (Vic) re Senator Gair's Appointment, 2 April 1974.' State Library of Victoria, DLP Papers, MS 10389, Box 118/1 in Folder marked 2/4/74.

<sup>58</sup> Ben Hills and Cameron Forbes, 'Gair, and who did what', unidentified clipping State Library of Victoria, DLP Papers, MS 10389, C/1/10, folder marked 11/4/74.

<sup>59</sup> Joh Bjelke-Petersen, *Don't you worry about that!*, p 111.

hoodwinked unless he deliberately wanted to be. But there were a few who believed that Gair had been conned. The legend that Gair was hoodwinked would be an enduring one. In 2002 respected journalist Peter Charlton said that as he consumed prawns ‘Gair was befuddled by drink and distracted by Maunsell’s attention.’<sup>60</sup> At the time others thought the same. DLP Senator Little, who had more reason than most to be angry with Gair, was surprisingly charitable, and hinted that it might not have been all Gair’s fault, saying he ‘perhaps was no longer quite as capable as he once was of defending himself from this kind of political chicanery.’<sup>61</sup> Don Lane, later a hardline minister in successive Queensland cabinets under Bjelke-Petersen was, unusually compassionate towards a political rival: ‘I feel pity for Senator Gair on this occasion in that he has fallen for this trick. He has been made use of in his old age, at a time when his thoughts are not quite as clear or as logical as they may have been in years gone by ... He was a sitting shot for these wheeler-dealers.’<sup>62</sup> Bob Santamaria did his best to let Gair off lightly in a TV broadcast, reminding viewers that ‘during the past year, [Gair] has been prey to illness, weariness, and frustration ... He will, I trust, be remembered more for his 25 years of active endeavour rather than the last unwise act in which he accepted the apple of destruction from malicious and unprincipled men.’<sup>63</sup>

Some members of his own party were less kind. One DLP Senator, livid at the turn of events, stormed into Gair’s office and hissed: ‘The worst of my wishes to you.’ Gair, ever ready to quip in the face of abuse, was unmoved. ‘They’re not much worse than

---

<sup>60</sup> Peter Charlton, ‘Deal Will Add New Page to [National] Party’s Dark History’, *Courier-Mail* 20 June 1998.

<sup>61</sup> *CPD Senate* 8 April 1974, p 741. A few days earlier, Little had not been so charitable, saying: ‘My own personal attitude is that Senator Gair is now completely unacceptable to me for ever more. I would not associate with him ever again.’ See *Sydney Morning Herald* 3 April 1974.

<sup>62</sup> *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 3 April 1974, p 3518.

<sup>63</sup> *Bulletin* 20 April 1974.

your best ones.’<sup>64</sup> *News Weekly*, which had supported Gair’s thoughts, words and deeds through some very difficult times was scathing: ‘The idea that [Whitlam] believed Senator Gair as suitable for the ambassadorship on his merits is too ridiculous to seriously entertain.’<sup>65</sup> They had changed their tune: six months before it had described Gair’s resignation from the DLP leadership as bringing ‘to an honourable close a career of great distinction.’<sup>66</sup>

A couple of years later, Gair would make some remarks that would indicate that he was quite capable of defending himself against many forms of political chicanery – when it suited him. He told the *Melbourne sun* in March 1976: ‘I’d been around politics long enough, including my time as Queensland premier, to know that the states had to issue the election writs. I also knew that Bjelke-Petersen had been around long enough to have this information, or if he didn’t, that he had enough people around him who would pass this information on.’ Gair admitted that he had spent two years chuckling over the episode.<sup>67</sup> He did not feel compelled to assist either side. ‘I didn’t feel it incumbent on me to tell Whitlam, and more than that I didn’t feel it incumbent to tell Joh Bjelke-Petersen.’<sup>68</sup>

But whether Gair knew or not was now a moot point. The *Queensland Government Gazette*, announcing the issuing of the writs for the election of five Senators, had been printed.

\*

\*

\*

\*

---

<sup>64</sup> *Telegraph* 17 March 1976.

<sup>65</sup> *News Weekly* 10 April 1974.

<sup>66</sup> *News Weekly* 10 October 1973.

<sup>67</sup> *Sun* (Melbourne) 18 March 1976.

<sup>68</sup> *Age* 6 December 1977.

Although the night when the Seven Seas Fish Café shipped in 40 kilogrammes of Queensland school prawns to Parliament House for the farewell to a long-term senator has gone down in Australian political folklore, the so called Night of the Long Prawns need not have been held at all. Under Section 59 of the Commonwealth *Electoral Act* of 1918, no matter what time the writs for an election are issued, they are legally deemed to have been issued ‘at the hour of six o’clock on the afternoon of the day on which the writ is issued.’ So after 6 pm there was nothing that the Whitlam government could do to halt Bjelke-Petersen’s plan (although for obvious reasons the latter was gratified to have the writs dated 2 April and Gair’s resignation dated the day after.) But as far as political purposes were concerned, the time, the expenses, the awkward conviviality, the beer and, most memorably, the prawns had all gone to waste.<sup>69</sup> Gair could, however, salvage a quip out of the situation some time later when, in breach of countless protocols, his Commonwealth car was invaded by legendary television journalist Richard Carleton *and* a two man camera crew that grilled him on the way to Canberra airport. Gair told Carleton, with an air of naivety that would not have fooled the latter for a minute: ‘I’m just the prawn in the sandwich.’<sup>70</sup>

Gair himself considered that he resigned from the Senate the morning of 3 April, when he handed a letter to Sir Magnus Cormack announcing that he had accepted the appointment as Ambassador to Dublin. Of the Queensland premier, he said: ‘Joh Bjelke-Petersen is on the bloody ball. It’s up to the lawyers to work out that matter now.’<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> Ben Hills and Cameron Forbes, ‘Gair, and Who Did What’, unidentified clipping DLP Papers, State Library of Victoria, , MS 10389, C/1/10, Folder marked 11/4/74.

<sup>70</sup> *Australian* 11 May 2006.

<sup>71</sup> *Age* 4 April 1974.

The last hope for the government was the constitutional technicality that Murphy had been mulling over the day before: the issue of whether Gair ceased to be a Senator when he accepted the position of Ambassador. Murphy told Parliament: 'It would seem that technically the place was vacated some little time ago, but certainly before any writ was issued by the Governor of Queensland.' The Solicitor-General, M H Byers, bolstered Murphy's case in a written legal opinion: 'It is my view, although naturally the matter is not entirely free of doubt, that as from 14 March the former senator became a person who then held an office of profit under the Crown.'

Sir Magnus Cormack, however, in his capacity as President of the Senate, ruled that the decision on whether Gair had vacated his place automatically by accepting an ambassadorship was one for the Senate to make. There were two days of debate on the matter, and the government took a verbal hiding in the process, but with the question to be decided on party lines, the result was always a foregone conclusion. ' [T]his case reeks of premeditated scheming and a disregard for political morals', thundered Senator Drake-Brockman, leader of the Country Party in the Senate.<sup>72</sup> 'I believe the people are entitled to be disgusted with the Prime Minister.'<sup>73</sup> Referring to the attempts of the Labor party to assert that Gair had ceased to be a Senator on either 14 or 21 March, Senator John Carrick termed the ploy as 'an evil-genius plan to trick the electors of Australia' and 'close to being a criminal fraud.'<sup>74</sup> The words were hard, but they counted for nothing. With the question to be decided on party lines, the result was always a foregone conclusion, and the government was defeated 30-26 in the Senate, which decided that Gair indeed had been a Senator until 3 April. And there was indeed a new Ambassador to Ireland.

---

<sup>72</sup> *CPD* Senate 8 April 1974, p 727.

<sup>73</sup> *CPD* Senate 8 April 1974 p 728.

<sup>74</sup> *CPD* Senate 8 April 1974, p 737.

## 10.5 GAIR'S TRAIL OF DESTRUCTION

It was a humiliating defeat for Whitlam. He gained nothing positive by getting Gair out of the way, but what was soon known as the Gair Affair was perhaps the first really serious questioning of Whitlam's administrative competence. As formidable an ALP personage as then ACTU President Bob Hawke, when asked if the government had handled the Gair matter poorly, responded diplomatically that it was 'a tenable proposition' to say that he thought Whitlam had mishandled things.<sup>75</sup> What was perhaps even worse was the tarnishing of Whitlam's carefully nurtured public image. The *Sydney Morning Herald* summed up the damage succinctly when it referred to 'the bruising of his image as a forceful idealist ... from his disingenuous performance in the Gair affair.'<sup>76</sup> The image of Whitlam as just another scheming politician did not readily dissipate. In October 1975 the *Bulletin* said that the aftermath of the Gair affair was the beginning of Whitlam's decline in prestige: 'he was seen as being involved in a grubby and grasping piece of political opportunism – previously considered beneath him.'<sup>77</sup>

The coalition, incensed by Whitlam's attempt to gain control of the Senate, threatened to use it as a reason to block supply and force an election. The Senate had already blocked several bills, but Labor returned several more to the Senate, which rejected them also. At Whitlam's request, Governor General Hasluck dissolved both houses of Parliament, the first double dissolution since 1951.

---

<sup>75</sup> *Australian* 5 April 1974.

<sup>76</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald* 11 April 1974.

<sup>77</sup> *Bulletin* 11 October 1975.

The Liberal and Country parties decided to vote against the appropriation bills and thus precipitated a double dissolution. The DLP decided to support the move, according to Jack Kane ‘lest it be seen as saving the Whitlam government from defeat.’<sup>78</sup> The DLP knew that the double dissolution meant diabolical trouble. The year before Treasurer Bill Hayden had warned that the DLP would be doomed if it forced a double dissolution, and that it should ‘carefully calculate the effects of its political peevishness.’<sup>79</sup> At the start of 1974, when the DLP thought it would only have three Senators up for re-election, McManus believed that only Kane was in real doubt, and was taking heart from the knowledge that even if the other two lost, he and Gair would still be wielding the Australian political balance of power until 1977.<sup>80</sup> Senator Jack Little from Victoria, who a few weeks earlier could have looked forward to a second six year term in the Senate after a half-Senate election knew the consequences. ‘I was the DLP’s best bet. Now I’m the shakiest.’<sup>81</sup> He declared in the Senate: ‘It is because this Parliament is more precious to the people of this nation than any of the little people in here and any of the parties represented that the Democratic Labor Party will go to the people, whatever seems to be the obvious political consequences.’<sup>82</sup>

The fallout from Gair died quickly as an election issue, to be replaced by economic considerations, and the Whitlam government suffered severe, but not terminal losses at the polls. During the campaign the idea that Gair would be dropped from his post ‘with the tacit support of the Foreign Affairs Department’ was discussed briefly.<sup>83</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> *News Weekly* 1 May 1974.

<sup>79</sup> *Herald* (Melbourne) 28 November 1973.

<sup>80</sup> *Herald* (Melbourne) 26 January 1974.

<sup>81</sup> *Herald* (Melbourne) 18 April 1974.

<sup>82</sup> *CPD Senate* 8 April 1974 p 745.

<sup>83</sup> *Australian* 16 April 1974

Gair had already thought of the possibility of losing his post before he had even taken it up, and had put on a brave face. 'I didn't want the job in the first place. Whatever they do there is nothing more I can do about it.'<sup>84</sup> He need not have worried. The question became a moot point after the Labor victory on 18 May – by which time Vincent Clair Gair was in Dublin.

The DLP performed very poorly in the election, although it was some time before the full extent of their losses was apparent. Despite Kane's assertion: 'We would have to be dead unlucky not to get one man in the Senate', and the belief in the days following the election that McManus had almost even odds to retain his seat and the chances of Kane in New South Wales and Byrne in Queensland were about 25 percent, the DLP did not win one place in the upper chamber.<sup>85</sup> To all intents and purposes, the party was finished, and it never looked like having parliamentary representation at the federal level of government anywhere again. A couple of years later, when the DLP was forced to wind up its operations, Gair said: 'The DLP was my life and work for many years ... I am sad to see its demise. But I am a realist. It had to happen. We had nothing left to fight for and achieve.'<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>84</sup> *Sun* (Melbourne) 5 April 1974.

<sup>85</sup> Peter Samuel, 'The demise of the dogged DLP' *Bulletin* 1 June 1974.

<sup>86</sup> *Australian* 22 April 1976.



## 10.6 GAIR THE AMBASSADOR

Gair cared little for the consequences of his actions, and relished the thought of becoming an ambassador: ‘Now I can conclude my political life with a bit of peace and quiet. I have had a good run, haven’t I?’<sup>87</sup> On 28 June 1974 Gair presented his credentials as Australian Ambassador to Ireland in a ceremony at the presidential palace. Gair told the Irish President that he wished Ireland success, prosperity, ‘and, above all, peace.’<sup>88</sup>

The ambassadorship did not carry the accoutrements for which Gair had hoped. At a first glance, the ambassadorial residence had a certain genteel, though modest grandeur that must have appealed to the Gairs after their many years at the middle class Brisbane suburb of Annerley. The main reception room at the embassy had what the *Australian Women’s Weekly* described as ‘warm, orange-red accents’, along with other smaller reception rooms, two dining rooms, a study, five bedrooms, four bathrooms and servants’ quarters.<sup>89</sup> But the novelty would soon wane. Whitlam did not even accede to Mrs Gair’s request for a colour television set. Nor was the impressive and spacious architecture of the embassy matched by its contents: the ambassador’s residence possessed only one settee and two chairs, and Gair would later recall ruefully: ‘The only luxury living we experienced was going to dinner at the house of other ambassadors. Occasionally we returned the shout.’<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>87</sup> V C Gair, ‘Why I Said Yes To Whitlam’, undated clipping, *Herald* (Melbourne), probably early April 1974. In Gair biographical cuttings file, National Library of Australia.

<sup>88</sup> *Herald* (Melbourne) 28 June 1974.

<sup>89</sup> *Australian women’s weekly* 24 April 1974.

<sup>90</sup> *Sun* (Melbourne) 6 May 1976.

Gair seems to have thrown himself happily enough into the job. Work, after all, had been his hobby all his life. 'I like occupation. Then I'm happy.' His aim was to interact with all levels of society. 'Don't think that because you are an ambassador you get around in striped pants and garters. I get around and talk to people.'<sup>91</sup> He later reminisced: 'It seems it's customary for ambassadors to restrict their contacts to professors and outdated lecturers, but I met a greater cross-section than any previous ambassador.'<sup>92</sup> Gair also spent some time visiting farms and factories, noting that even with 'the troubles' the Irish were building up a balanced economy.<sup>93</sup> While in Ireland, Gair helped one Irishman, living in Western Australia, trace the mother from whom he had been separated before he even had memories of seeing her. Her letters had stopped coming four years before, but Gair was able to track down the local priest and the man's aunt, who, sadly, had not had an address to write to to inform him of his mother's death.<sup>94</sup> Perhaps Gair, with his own documented and deep affection for his own mother, felt the man's plight more keenly than most.

As Ambassador, Gair was nothing if not memorable. During his time in Ireland he added to the storehouse of anecdotes and apocryphal stories that had been gathering about him for over forty years. While in Dublin, he received all sorts of 'ridiculous regulations' from both Prime Ministers Whitlam and Fraser aiming at restricting his use of his government car. He was instructed to meet people at the airport by going on the bus. Gair was as unsubtle as ever in meeting this challenge, simply ignoring the instructions. The Ambassador preferred to follow an active program in engaging the Irish community, and testified, probably with unassailable veracity, how he liked to

---

<sup>91</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald* 10 January 1976.

<sup>92</sup> *Age* 6 December 1977.

<sup>93</sup> *Courier-Mail* 12 May 1975.

<sup>94</sup> *Sunday Independent* (Dublin?) 1 December 1974.

talk to people in little country pubs. ‘Paddy [Hunt, his driver] and I didn’t pass too many of them without dropping in.’ According to Gair, being a diplomat was easy. ‘All you need is common sense and discretion.’<sup>95</sup>

By one account, Gair showed little of either as Ambassador. On one occasion, he spoke on the Irish national television station. While at the studio, mercifully before he went to air, Gair ‘gave a memorable example of his wit. The smokeroom (or bordello) story that he related was voted by the assorted station operatives as one of the gamiest in their collective experience.’ Even less appreciative were the staffers of the Indian embassy who heard from Gair a story about his honeymoon thirty years before. The story lost something in the translation: ‘It was a long story about his honeymoon, and the question of single or double beds, and apparently how Mr Gair’s snores forced his bride to sleep on the rug. Or perhaps Mr Gair slept on the rug. I am not sure.’ At the Australian embassy itself Gair won ‘the reputation of being an antipodean Romeo – paunchy, perhaps, but none the less insistent.’ Three female staff members had resigned, one of whom ‘told stories of cries of ‘Help! Help!’ coming from offices occupied by nubile girls, and of the great Australian adjective echoing resonantly through the corridors.’<sup>96</sup>

After his death, a letter from the counsellor to the Dublin Embassy, Tom Holland, to Anthony Vincent, an Assistant Secretary in the Europe Branch of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs, was reproduced in the press. Holland opened with the caveat that he could not ‘describe every point in the situation or refer to every incident

---

<sup>95</sup> *Courier-Mail* 24 July 1976.

<sup>96</sup> Donal Tully, ‘Gair Does the Lair In Dublin’, *National Times* 27 September – 3 October 1976. In March 2007 a very senior ALP figure who knew Gair well from the 1950s onwards told me that Gair’s cavalier behaviour towards young women dated back to his days in the Premier’s chair.

[that had] marred an otherwise harmonious relationship with the Irish' since Gair's accession.

The former premier and senator had not shown any interest in meeting diplomatic contacts but preferred to meet 'interesting people' instead. Not that there were many of those either: Holland reported 'Neither his secretary nor I have been able to find out who his contacts are, and it seems that they are fewer than one might expect.'

While he disapproved of Gair's lapses in this direction, Holland took an even dimmer view of some of Gair's other actions.

At one reception, Holland said, one man threatened to punch Gair in the face if he did not leave the man's wife alone. At another function, a garrulous and gregarious Gair seemed to want to reminisce at length about his recent visit to a pantyhose factory. Even Mrs Gair was not above joining her husband in his mild, self-deprecating ribaldry, and reminded him: 'Don't forget to tell them about the pantyhose they gave you.' Gair replied to her, and the gathering: 'Well, I'm not wearing them now.'

On another occasion Gair addressed the British Ambassador to Ireland, the urbane Sir Arthur Galsworthy, as 'you old bugger' and wanted to know, even less diplomatically, 'What are those fuckers in Northern Ireland doing these days?' When offered a cup of tea – never, probably, a preferred beverage – he asked: 'haven't you got anything better than bloody tea?' One official, appalled by Gair's behaviour described Gair as 'a barbarian', but added diplomatically 'I suppose he must have some good qualities.'

Gair would call women into his room and ask them to sit on his knee or give him a kiss. 'But I am the ambassador. You should not mind what I do.' During a migration interview he interrupted the proceedings to admire the necklace, and then stroke the chest of a female interviewee. When introduced to a member of Senate of the University College Dublin, Gair commented: 'I've often heard of the ignorant Irish, so it's nice to meet an intelligent one.' Even his minor foibles were inexplicable. For reasons best known to himself, and against the advice of his staff, Gair persisted in putting Rhodesian and South African periodicals among the Australian ones in the Embassy waiting room.

Holland was almost in despair at the Ambassador's behaviour. 'We have tried to explain to Mr Gair the normal diplomatic practices and attitudes he is expected to adopt in his present position ... but he shows little or no interest.' Even though he was fulfilling his last public role, the varied experiences of over forty years had done almost nothing to widen Gair's outlook or lower the blinkers, the stolid wearing of which had characterised his decades in public life. Holland sighed: 'He is a difficult man to brief as he has a closed mind, and a great faith in the rightness of his way of doing things.' There were hopeful rumours that Gair would be recalled and replaced by former Deputy Prime Minister Lance Barnard, who had recently resigned from the Whitlam government, but Barnard was posted to Sweden instead. Holland concluded: 'This whole situation has, I am afraid, considerably set back our relations with Ireland during the past 12 months. After reaching their highest point of warmth and

effectiveness under [previous Ambassador] Keith Brennan they must now be at about the lowest level ever experienced.’<sup>97</sup>

### 10.7 GAIR’S DIPLOMATIC ‘SILENCES’

Gair had been lucky to find himself as an ambassador, and to be furnished with a relatively easy way in which to conclude his public life. He would have served himself well by at least observing some semblance of diplomatic convention, but his personality and years of doing exactly how he pleased had left him ill-suited for that.

The *Irish Times* assessed Gair well when he arrived in Dublin:

*He speaks like a man walking on eggs, perhaps because he has only just come to this country.*

*Yet one gets the impression that he is a man who doesn’t like to have to hold his tongue for too long.*

*He enjoys being able to say what he feels.*

On that occasion, Gair committed the diplomatic faux pas of reiterating his views on Vietnam. ‘We were right to be invited with America in Vietnam because we were defending the people of the South against the imposition of an undemocratic government.’<sup>98</sup> No one, as far as is known, castigated him for this breach of protocol. It may not have been discussed at all, or, if it was, the feeling may have been that the issue was academic given Australia’s withdrawal from the region after the election of Whitlam. Or perhaps the Labor government in Australia had had enough of Gair and his doings for the time being.

---

<sup>97</sup> ‘Vince Gair’s Diplomatic Triumphs’, *National Times* 11-17 October 1981: ‘The Gair Gaffes’, *Herald*, (Melbourne) 17 October 1981. Gair had previously confessed to being an admirer of ‘feminine pulchritude.’ See Bruce Juddery, ‘More than merely a titular head’, *Canberra Times* 22 November 1972.

<sup>98</sup> Geoff Allen, ‘Ambassador Gair Tells of His Hopes and Future’, *Sun-Herald* 21 July 1974.

Certain utterances at a press conference at the end of 1974, however, would be remembered and acted upon. On that occasion Gair, typically oblivious of precedent, was critical once more of Liberal leader Billy Snedden at a press conference for visiting Prime Minister Whitlam in Dublin. Gair seated himself next to Whitlam, and ‘with a grin proceeded to upstage a not-too-unwilling Prime Minister.’ During the conference, Gair, no doubt to Whitlam’s delight, reiterated the comments he had made in Australia the previous year. While Gair was quoting his own previously uttered remarks, the tone and the language were less than appropriate for diplomatic circles. ‘Snedden couldn’t create an impression on a bloody soft cushion ... he couldn’t win a round in a circular door.’<sup>99</sup> Gair’s behaviour had shocked journalists and diplomats, and Whitlam’s staff were incredulous when told of his comments.<sup>100</sup> But the correspondent of the *Melbourne Age* could see a lighter side, and remarked:

*Clearly the star performer at Monday’s press conference in Dublin ... was no leprechaun, no charming mischievous elf. For one thing, whoever heard of a gravel-voiced elf speaking broad Australian and inclined to be (to put it politely) very portly.*<sup>101</sup>

Back in Australia, the Liberals could not see the humour in the situation. The deputy leader of the Opposition, Philip Lynch, called for Gair’s resignation, calling Gair’s attack on Snedden ‘scurrilous and reprehensible.’ Lynch could not have been less ambiguous. ‘Mr Whitlam must not tolerate Mr Gair’s statements. If he does, Mr Gair can count on a premature retirement as soon as the Liberal and Country Parties are elected to office.’<sup>102</sup>

---

<sup>99</sup> Ian Frykberg, ‘PM Not Unduly Worried at ex-DLP Envoy’s Blarney’, *Sydney Morning Herald* 26 December 1974.

<sup>100</sup> Russell Schneider and Geoff Sorby, ‘Lynch Wants PM To Demand Gair Resign’, *Australian* 26 December 1974.

<sup>101</sup> *Age* 27 December 1974.

<sup>102</sup> ‘Gair’s Resignation Demanded by Lynch’, *Sydney Morning Herald* 26 December 1974.

It will never be known if, without this episode, Gair would have been allowed by the coalition that would win government less than a year later, to remain in Dublin undisturbed till the end of his three year term. But Gair, for no perceptible reason, had put the issue beyond doubt.

## **10.8 RECALLED TO AUSTRALIA**

Governor-General John Kerr dismissed the Whitlam government on 11 November 1975, appointing the coalition under Malcolm Fraser as a caretaker until the elections of 13 December. Gair was careful not to say too much on the dismissal: ‘I am not interested in politics any more. I am an ambassador now.’<sup>103</sup>

His uncharacteristic reticence was a case of too little, and too late. After the resounding coalition victory, Gair’s position was precarious. A few days later, it was reported that the new Foreign Minister, Andrew Peacock, had said that Gair would be dismissed. When asked to comment, the by now probably quite anxious Ambassador to Ireland replied, with obviously unconscious irony – perhaps – ‘As a diplomat you cannot expect me to comment on such reports.’<sup>104</sup> On 20 December the *Age* reported that Gair would be given the opportunity to resign rather than being dismissed.

On 21 January 1976 the new Foreign Minister Andrew Peacock sent a cable to Gair: ‘The government has reviewed the overall position in relation to heads of mission departments. I wish to inform you that arising from the review the government has

---

<sup>103</sup> *Bulletin* 22 November 1975.

<sup>104</sup> *Sun* (Melbourne) 19 December 1975.



decided to terminate your appointment as Ambassador to Ireland.’ Gair was furious at what he later would term ‘a mean, despicable and petty act.’ Responding that day he cabled Peacock that he had heard the decision from the Australian press two weeks before:

*Elementary good manners I believe surely would demand that I would be advised before the press ... I was given to understand my appointment was for three years. I challenge you or anyone else to say that I have not discharged my duties conscientiously and well.*

After declaring to Peacock that he had been in the office every working day of the week when not ‘in other parts of Ireland on official visits’, the old man asked indignantly:

*Have I been singled out for special treatment in return for my many years of personal effort and expense throughout Australia helping to keep the Liberal Party in government and for the support given to the Liberals in the Senate? ... [I] demand a reason for the termination of my appointment.*

Gair had a telling point, but had either forgotten, or had a faint hope that the Liberals would overlook how his unholy alliance with Whitlam got him to Ireland in the first place. In any case, Peacock was in no mood to bandy words with the old warrior, who had entered Parliament seven years before he was born. ‘I am not repeat not prepared to enter into debate about the decision. The decision is final.’<sup>105</sup>

---

<sup>105</sup> *Herald* (Melbourne) 12 January 1976.

## 10.9 THE LAST YEARS

There was no fanfare for Vince Gair when he returned to Australia. Gair and the ever loyal Nell were met by one of Gair's sisters, the eldest Gair son, Paul, and an official from the Foreign Affairs Department at the Brisbane Airport on 12 March. Not one former political colleague in Canberra had welcomed him home with a telegram or phoned to wish him well. But he wistfully talked of a possible return to politics. 'I want to get my land legs and make a survey of the political scene. Then I'll determine my future.' One of the reporters asked about the DLP, of which he, curiously, believed he was still a member despite his expulsion, from the parliamentary wing of the party, at least, on 3 April 1974. Mischievously, Gair remarked: 'I might even do that.' He expanded no further on what 'that' really meant. Someone asked about his chances of getting back into the Senate, and Gair was terse: 'What do you think?' But he left little doubt that he would have savoured a return to the fray. 'There is still room for someone to go into politics to say what Australia needs. From what I can see it is the inept being faced by the dangerous. The Liberals are inept, Labor is dangerous.'<sup>106</sup>

Despite his grumpy pronouncements and impish musings on his return to Australia, Gair's last years were quiet ones, and he only made news occasionally. He spent much of his time at his unit at Tweed Heads, and sometimes enjoyed a recreational activity then not legally possible in Queensland – the playing of poker machines. In April 1976 the DLP in Queensland announced that it was putting its political

---

<sup>106</sup> 'Among His Flowers, Vince Gair Scents Political Battle Again', *Australian* 13 March 1976; Alan Underwood, 'He's Back, Bitter, But Looking For Action: "Bulldog" Gair Out For Another Bite', *Courier-Mail* 13 March 1976.

operations in mothballs.<sup>107</sup> Two days later, Gair sent his money in to pay his dues and had it returned. Gavan Duffy, party secretary, announced that Gair had not been a member of the DLP since 1974, and was not authorised to make statements on behalf of the party in any capacity whatsoever. Gair growled: '[T]hey owe me enough to make me a financial member for life. They are nothing but a mob of little children and I am not unhappy to see them go out of business.'<sup>108</sup>

Gair's old political cronies had been understandably cool to him since his return from Dublin. The Victorian DLP secretary Jim Brosnan was cold on the phone to him: the shameless Gair quipped: 'OK, but the next time you say the Lord's Prayer you'd better skip that part about forgiving those who trespass against us.' Jack Kane was similarly cool, but Joh Bjelke-Petersen reminded him, accurately, 'Just you remember, Vince Gair did more good things than bad.' Shortly afterwards, Gair rang Kane at home. When the two met they did not discuss politics.<sup>109</sup>

Although he confessed that he had to be satisfied with 'visits from the old timers', the old warrior had lost none of his irascibility. His outlook on the world had not widened, and his faith in simplistic solutions endured. He told one interviewer in 1979:

*All of these young people out of work should be in the Army. We should get something for our money; they are lying around idle ... I'd make them work. I'd put them into training all of them, not only those who can't get a job. I'd require every student who reaches leaving age to go into the Army for 12 months before he goes to university.*<sup>110</sup>

---

<sup>107</sup> Max Jessop, 'A Last Hurrah For the DLP', *Australian* 22 April 1976. In 2004, Mrs Patricia Payne of Holloways Beach, Queensland, told me that she frequently saw the Gairs playing poker machines in Tweed Heads during the late 1970s.

<sup>108</sup> 'Gair Expelled By State DLP He Founded', *Australian* 29 April 1976.

<sup>109</sup> Jack Kane, *Exploding the myths: the political memoirs of Jack Kane*, Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1989, pp 193-194.

<sup>110</sup> Tony Blackie, 'At 78, Vincent Gair Still Has a Lot to Say', *Sun Herald* 6 May 1979.

## 10.10 DEATH

Gair sometimes said that he would not see another Labor government in Queensland, even if he lived to be eighty.<sup>111</sup> As it was, he missed out on both milestones. After suffering a mild stroke he was hospitalised in early November 1980. Gair breathed his last at 3.30 am on 11 November, with Nell Gair and their two sons by his bedside. Uncharacteristically, he did not go out fighting, but died in his sleep. He was three and a half months short of eighty. Labor would not govern in Queensland again for another nine years.

It was five years to the day since the dismissal of the Whitlam government, which Gair had, indirectly, set in motion by the acceptance of a diplomatic post in Dublin. And it was a century to the day of the execution of bushranger Ned Kelly, another argumentative and sometimes courageous Australian with Irish ancestry whose failings and subsequent voluble attempts at self-justification also attracted copious newspaper coverage.<sup>112</sup>

Archbishop Rush of Brisbane presided over a concelebrated Requiem Mass at the St Mary Immaculate Church in Ipswich Road, Annerley on 13 November. The Mass was followed by a state funeral.

Father Barney McLaughlin, onetime Chaplain of the Movement in Queensland, preached a eulogy that, as is the way of such things, maximised the subject's virtues

---

<sup>111</sup> Tony Blackie, 'At 78, Vincent Gair Still Has a Lot to Say', *Sun-Herald* 6 May 1979.

<sup>112</sup> Gair and Ned Kelly appeared in a cartoon together in the *Courier-Mail* of 4 October 1951. The cartoon was in relation to the short lived furore over butter pricing during Gair's time as acting Premier. It is unlikely that Gair found the cartoon comparing him with a criminal, however celebrated, amusing.

and minimised his faults, but still had a more than reasonable degree of accuracy. No one could have argued that the gregarious Gair had a ‘warm personality’ or that ‘family was paramount in his thought and life.’ All in the congregation would have agreed that Gair possessed:

*a style all of his own – a combination of human understanding and rugged toughness, quick wit and steely determination, personal openness and political skill, and probably a share of human frailty.*

Most would have shared McLaughlin’s contention that Gair could be ‘wilful, impatient and on occasions arbitrary, but he could also claim great achievements.’ Even though the statement was qualified, it was perhaps debatable that Gair ‘always had humility, even though there was a bit of bounce in it’, and there were definite exceptions to the declaration that Gair ‘had love for people ... as individuals, as persons.’ McLaughlin said that Gair ‘never lost the common touch’: there were those who would differ.<sup>113</sup> Given Gair’s well-attested to stubbornness and blinkered outlook, a central theme of his life and this thesis, it could be even more strongly debated that Gair ‘had made mistakes and was even [ever?] quick enough to recognise them.’

Eight men bore his pall. Family, friend and political foe, they all had different reasons to remember. Sons Paul and Clem and the ever courteous, decent and faithful Condon

---

<sup>113</sup> Don Lane, later a prominent minister in successive Bjelke-Petersen Cabinets, tells the tale of Gair threatening to keep a police officer stationed in Cloncurry for the rest of his career because the officer, acting in accordance with police regulations, refused to open a door for him. The incident indicated to the then twenty-year-old constable ‘that the notion that the Labor Party represented the working man and was in favour of a classless society was a bit of a fraud.’ See Don Lane, *Trial and error*, Brisbane: Boolarong, 1993, p 5. Fortunately for the police officer, Gair was out of office a few years later, and the officer was eventually transferred to the Gold Coast.

Alan Hudson, former editor of the *Cairns Post*, recalled Gair on the election trail at the pub in Gordonvale, ‘glad-handing the locals and advising them to buy Mt Isa shares.’ Hudson noted that it was ‘sound investment advice, but he should have realised the average worker was flat out making ends meet, without speculating his hard earned cash on the market.’ Alan Hudson, ‘The Call of Gordonvale’, *Cairns Post* 2 September 2004.

Byrne remembered a father, a mentor and a friend. The three Liberals, Sir Thomas Hiley (who knew Gair all his life), Sir Gordon Chalk, and Jim Killen remembered an opponent with whom they all clashed, though with none of the personal bitterness that had accompanied Gair's internecine political battles. Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen remembered a man who gave him the opportunity to strike out at a hated foe. And Ed Casey, state Labor leader remembered a man whose actions of twenty-three years before left him with hopeless prospects at a forthcoming state election.

Gair was buried in the habit of a Redemptorist Oblate, a charitable Catholic order of which his brother-in-law was also a member. Father McLaughlin said how Gair, who could claim many priests, nuns, brothers and Catholic lay men and women among his close friends, had 'genuinely accepted Catholic doctrine, faith and practice – religious and moral – all through his life.'

The funeral cortege left the church, and proceeded to the Nudgee Monumental Cemetery in the northern suburbs, where the mortal remains of Vincent Clair Gair were laid to rest.<sup>114</sup>

---

<sup>114</sup> [Brian Doyle], 'Vince' Gair Had Long and Eventful Public Life Career', *Catholic Leader* 23 November 1980.

## 10.11 THE MEASURE OF A MAN

The passing of Queensland's most noted cold warrior attracted comment from all sides of politics. As he had managed to antagonise almost everyone, praise was either perfunctory or qualified. McManus said that Gair had done many good things for Queensland and Australia 'up to the point where he accepted the ambassadorship to Ireland.' Opposition leader Bill Hayden's remarks were among the kindest. Hayden acknowledged his 'profound' political differences with Gair, but added: 'Despite these differences his political skills, his tenacity and his toughness must be acknowledged by any fair-minded person.' Joh Bjelke-Petersen, whose life followed a different course because of the events of 1957, could not resist the chance to score a political point, and said that Gair would be remembered as a true Labor leader who had seen the dangers of militant unions and tried to fight them.

The remarks of Jack Egerton, an old foe, were a lot kinder than might have been expected, even if the words were tintured by Egerton's contempt for the Labor party that had expelled him four years before. 'He was a real pollie in the style of Forgan Smith and Ned Hanlon, a man who really worked for the people and didn't line his pockets like modern-day counterparts.'

Others preferred to damn the departed with faint praise. Stan Keon, then secretary of the Victorian branch of the DLP said: 'Rest in peace. I wouldn't want to say anything more than that.' Jack Duggan, for over twenty years the object of Gair's undying hatred, simply commented that in the 1957 split Gair had taken the action he thought was right. Former Prime Minister Whitlam, whose most rational reaction to the name

of Gair, then and now, is probably something approaching a reminiscent shudder, declined to comment, with his staff saying he did not wish to be disturbed.

In Queensland ALP leader Ed Casey, bore the brunt of Gair's last blow against the party that he both loved and hated for nearly seventy years. Gair died on the opening day of Labor's 1980 state election campaign. Casey's policy speech was bumped off the front pages to make way for the news of Gair's passing.<sup>115</sup> Eighteen days later, the Queensland branch of the ALP lost its ninth straight election.

\*

\*

\*

During the course of this project, whenever I have mentioned Gair's name, the reaction, if not a blank look, was usually one of amusement or revulsion. No voices were raised in admiration. Contemporary mentions of Gair are rarely adulatory, fulfilling somewhat McManus's prophecy that his reputation would suffer dearly from his decision to go to Dublin.<sup>116</sup> When he is mentioned at all it is usually in the context of the ambassadorial appointment<sup>117</sup> and occasionally in the context of the Split. His positive achievements as minister, premier and senator are very rarely mentioned.

---

<sup>115</sup> *Herald* (Melbourne) 12 November 1980, except for Keon's comment, which was in the *Herald* for 11 November 1980, and Egerton's comment, which was in the *Courier-Mail* for 16 November 1980. .

<sup>116</sup> However, Kerry Shine, Attorney General in the Beattie government from 2006 is on record as saying that Gair was 'my hero as a teenager.' See *Queensland Parliamentary Debates* 5 April 2001, p 416: Tim O'Dwyer, 'Taking a Shine to Kerry', *Gold Coast Bulletin* 3 November 2006. The writer Jay Verney, whose father was a Queensland Labor Party candidate in Rockhampton in 1960 said that as a youngster she 'venerated' Gair. Jay Verney, 'Sensual Degrees of Separation', *Griffith Review* no 6, Summer 2004-2005.

<sup>117</sup> Later appointments to the position of Ambassador to Ireland would attract negative comment. Former Premier of Western Australia, Brian Burke, who served as Ambassador to Ireland, was later jailed for corruption. John Herron was appointed Ambassador to Ireland in 2002 after serving only a couple of months into a senatorial term.



The very day Gair died, Paul Ormonde, author of works on the Movement, posed (and answered) the rhetorical question: 'Will history be kind to Vince Gair? Probably not. He made too many twists and turns to be cast in any saintly mould.'<sup>118</sup>

No obituarist or historian ever described Gair as a saint. However, it is almost too easy to dismiss Gair as simply either a figure of fun, or, more sinisterly, as a political manifestation of all that is negative, blinkered, suspicious, reactionary and intolerant about the mythical Australian, or Queensland 'character.' True, Gair's longevity in his chosen vocation necessitated that he display, with some reflectivity, the traits of the people he represented, but few among those people would have followed the paths and made the enemies that he did. So much of the discord in his life could have been avoided with just a little flexibility, compromise or cooperation. The 1957 party split might never have occurred if Gair had been, as Bill Hayden put it, 'a little bending, even only slightly adroit.'<sup>119</sup>

It is said of old, that politics is the art of the possible, and as such, politics require compromise as humans require air and blood. Gair rarely compromised, and took notice of no one, even when his political existence was at stake. But had he been less blinkered and stubborn, Gair could have, in Hollywood parlance, 'been a contender'. Alternative history has little place in a doctoral thesis but it is interesting to momentarily postulate what might have been the outcome had there been no Labor split. More than likely, Gair would have continued to head a very cautious and pragmatic, albeit slightly reformist government that, buttressed by a solid majority, would have drifted with ease into the prosperous 1960s, leaving a solid legacy to the

---

<sup>118</sup> Paul Ormonde, 'Vince Gair, Ever Shrewd', *Herald* (Melbourne) 11 November 1980.

<sup>119</sup> W Hayden, *Hayden: an autobiography*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1986, p 89.

capable Duggan. Gair could have been remembered with a respect that was far more broadly based than a grudging admiration for his courage and combativeness that was actually the case.

Despite his somewhat low standing in the court of history, a standing that is largely based on the two major and discordant episodes of his political life, Gair left some positive legacies. Harry Wright, DLP organiser and activist, once told me that he was happy with what the party achieved, in that it kept Labor out of office ‘until their attitudes became more moderate.’ Gair himself would say: ‘I kept Labor out at a critical time.’<sup>120</sup> Perhaps there was a case for keeping Labor out during the period between the 1954 Labor split and the 1967 advent of Whitlam. If the troublesome factor of involvement in Vietnam is removed from the equation, few people outside the Labor party would try to argue that Australia is the poorer for the long, prosperous and stable, if somewhat soporific reign of Menzies as compared to the hypothetical terms of the paranoiac and clearly ailing post-1954 Evatt and the uncharismatic Calwell. But the life of Vincent Clair Gair changed Australia in ways that involve more specificity and less speculation.

Sidney Hook, philosopher, and author of *The hero in history* divided the makers of history into the ‘eventful man’ and the ‘event-making man.’ According to Hook, the merely ‘eventful’ players in history performed roles analogous to that of the little Dutch boy who kept his finger in the whole of the dyke and prevented the flooding of the town. The action was important, but could have been performed by almost anyone. On the other hand, the ‘event-making’ person is one whose actions are ‘the

---

<sup>120</sup> Tony Blackie, ‘At 78, Vincent Gair Still Has a Lot to Say’, *Sun-Herald* 6 May 1979.

consequences of outstanding capacities of intelligence, will, and character rather than that of accidents of position.’<sup>121</sup> During his career, Gair displayed characteristics of both types of player.

Gair would always be justifiably proud of the reforms he introduced as state Labor minister, but although he had the pleasure of enacting legislation for a 40 hour week, tea breaks and long service leave, the concepts did not originate with him, and he was only a cog in a wheel in an economic, social and political environment that generated the affluence that made such conditions affordable. True, he was an important cog, and no doubt had a role in determining the timing and extent of such legislation, but episodes such as these are the actions of an ‘eventful’ rather than ‘event-making’ person.

While Gair and the DLP were not alone in trying to bring about state aid for denominational schools, the fact remains that they were the earliest, most consistent and most vocal supporters for the change. Few would doubt that Menzies’s about-face on the issue in the election of 1963 was aimed primarily at retaining vital DLP preferences. But it had a welcome benefit for Australia, for sectarianism vanished as a factor in Australian politics and, indeed, Australian life almost overnight. There were other factors: a more educated Australia, and an increasingly secular age played a part in removing the sectarian strand from the skein of Australian politics, but no one would doubt that equitable distribution of government funds regardless of the denomination of a school removed a significant cause for discord. Although the DLP,

---

<sup>121</sup> Sidney Hook, *The hero in history: a study in limitation and possibility*. Boston: Beacon, 1955, p 154. Despite the appellations Hook gave his two types of historical player, he did not, of course, preclude the possibility of women making history. I acknowledge the use that my own early mentor, Denis Murphy, made of Hook’s theories in his biography of T J Ryan.

much less Gair himself, could not exclaim credit for the change exclusively, it seems appropriate to place him in the 'event-making' category on this occasion.

On the occasion of the 'nexus' referendum, it is just possible that the actions of Gair and McManus prevented the Australia of 2007 being governed by a legislature of 240 in the lower house alone. It is more likely, however, that the case for more politicians was doomed from the start, even if Australia's three largest parties supported it. But the fact remains that no political party or politician except for the DLP and their only two federal representatives argued against the change - and the change did not come. Were Gair and McManus 'event-makers' on this occasion? We will never know.

Gair and his manipulative cohorts prevented an early election in 1968 for Prime Minister John Gorton, assuredly depriving of him of a large parliamentary majority in that year, and leaving him with only a narrow one after the election of 1969. It was the only time Gorton would ever face the people. He returned to power with his parliamentary numbers decreased, and his prestige diminished. Gorton, in contrast to what probably would have been the case had he had an election in 1968, was left vulnerable. The sometimes malicious, but chronically inept McMahon would replace him in less than eighteen months, helping to make the first ALP victory for twenty-three years a reality, and, in a neat turnaround, to seal the fate of Gair and the DLP. In a roundabout way, Gair and his men, by denying Gorton an election in 1968, helped paved the way for Whitlam, so we are on much safer ground in placing him in the category of 'event-making' for these actions.

But whether Gair was ‘eventful’ or ‘event-making’, the fact remains that Gair’s place in history was influenced by his limitations rather than his strengths. Gair had many qualities that were extremely useful for a politician, particularly one as given to wheeling and dealing as he was. He was sagacious, shrewd, pragmatic, calculating and watchful. A government Senator once taunted him ‘You’re a suspicious old bastard.’ Gair retorted instantly: ‘I wouldn’t be here if I weren’t.’<sup>122</sup>

Despite this native shrewdness, Gair continuously demonstrated a stubborn inability or unwillingness to adapt to changing circumstances, even when the potential for disastrous consequences were obvious. In his dealings with the QCE, Gair preferred to commit certain political suicide rather than even investigating a compromise. The strategy won him sympathy in the electorate, and there is nothing to suggest that Gair disliked the role of political martyr, but his obduracy rendered himself politically irrelevant for nearly a decade. He was extremely lucky to make the most successful comeback in twentieth century Australian politics, with the exception of that of Robert Gordon Menzies. But after some successes in his new sphere, he preferred not to build on them where he could, but instead to remain with old and tired precepts that were demonstrably losing favour with an increasingly sophisticated electorate. He showed little reluctance to become a living anachronism, and did not even seem to mind it. It was a dangerous strategy for a politician, but one that for him represented no ideological or philosophical departure. The path was a long one, but there was no perceptible intellectual difference, no widening of outlook, no change in latitude or attitude between the energetic, but locally-focused acolyte of 1932 and the calcified reactionary of 1974. Vincent Clair Gair never changed, but the world around him did.

---

<sup>122</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald* 29 August 1968.

His inability to recognise this deprived him of a chance to be a major figure in Queensland and Australian politics for reasons other than his combative contentiousness.

For all this, Gair was respected, and, moreover, deserving of that respect. With his early work as mines, and then as labour minister, and his later use of the balance of power in the Senate, Gair left Queensland and Australia better than it might have been otherwise. Many would argue that this is subsumed by his failings in 1957, which helped to hand government to the conservatives for a generation, but Gair was not the only one who failed in 1957. In any case, divided and out-of-government Labor did not endure, but the forty-hour week, the Senate nexus and state aid to private schools did. Perhaps a personable, smooth and refined Gair would have been easier to like retrospectively, but he would most likely have scoffed at the thought of bothering to make any efforts in this direction. He always remained true to his own personality, despite its imperfections, and whatever respect he gained, he gained on his own terms, by being himself. To adapt a now hackneyed phrase, what you saw was what you got, and Vincent Clair Gair liked it that way. Jack Kane summed him up in a sentence with which it is impossible for this biographer to disagree: 'He could be a difficult, obstreperous man, but it was impossible not to like him.'<sup>123</sup>

---

<sup>123</sup> Jack Kane, *Exploding the myths* p 194.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

Papers emanating from or pertaining to various organisations and individuals were consulted at the following institutions as listed below. In most cases, of course, only a limited range of the papers were needed: specific references to those used appear in the text.

#### FRYER LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

Colin Clark  
Margaret Cribb  
Theo Kissick  
Denis Murphy  
Rockhampton Labour Organisations  
Trades and Labour Council, Queensland

#### JOHN OXLEY LIBRARY, STATE LIBRARY OF QUEENSLAND

Australian Labor Party  
Democratic Labor Party  
Sir Francis Nicklin  
Sir Thomas Hiley  
Edward Walsh

#### NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA

George Cole  
Vince Gair  
Frank McManus  
Gavin Souter

#### STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA

Chris Curtis  
Democratic Labor Party

#### PRIVATELY HELD

Frank Waters

## ARCHIVAL SOURCES

### NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA.

Whitlam, E G. Papers. Series M522/0, Item G1. Senator Gair's Appointment.

### QUEENSLAND STATE ARCHIVES

Card Index to Migrants.

Chief Secretary's Batch no 468C no 1 Three Weeks Leave.

Home Secretary's Office Register for applications for situations in the gaol service, ca 1896-1899, A/4782.

Prison's Department Register of Officials and Warders ca 1865-1947, A/19923.

## INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Anderson, Kenneth (Sir). [Interview]. ORAL TRC 121/90. National Library of Australia.

Bolte, Henry (Sir). [Interview.] ORAL TRC 121/73. National Library of Australia.

Bray, T C (Theodor Charles) (Sir). [Interview]. ORAL TRC 121/9. National Library of Australia.

Daly, Fred. [Interview]. ORAL TRC 4900/63. National Library of Australia.

Duggan, Jack. [Interviews.] 1-13, 1985. (Transcript copies of these interviews were kindly supplied to me by Dr Maurice French of the University of Southern Queensland.)

Freeth, Gordon. 'Record of Interview with Sir Gordon Freeth in His Office in Perth, WA, 9 August 1984', Gavin Souter Papers, National Library of Australia. The interviewer was Peter Edwards.

Gair, Vincent. [Interview]. 'Monday Conference' transcript, no 24, 25 October 1971.

Gair, Vincent. [Transcript of TV Interview with Gair on 'A Public Affair' 8 October 1973.]

Gair Papers, Series 5 Speeches, articles, broadcasts, Box 6 Folder 47.

Hansen, Brendan Percival. [Interview]. ORAL TRC 4900/82. National Library of Australia.

Hiley, Thomas (Sir). [Interview.] ORAL TRC 253. National Library of Australia.

Kane, Jack. [Interviews]. ORAL TRC 829: ORAL TRC 1948/2: ORAL TRC 4900/46.

National Library of Australia.

Kane, Jack. [Interview]. 'Monday Conference' transcript, no 79, 9 April 1973.

McManus, Frank. [Interview.] ORAL TRC 121/72. National Library of Australia.

Waters, Frank. Interview by Brian Costar, 17 June 1975. Waters Papers. Privately held, but photocopy held by author.



## AUDIOVISUAL ITEMS

*Don's party*. (DVD, two disc collectors edition.) [Sydney?]: Umbrella Entertainment, 2005. (Originally screened, 1976.)

Gair, Vincent Clair. [Interview with Vincent Gair.] Interviewer: John Edwards, 1972. ORAL TRC 168-5. National Library of Australia.

Gair, Vincent Clair. 'Senator Vince Gair Interviewed', Sydney: ABC, 1975. Audiocassette, Fryer Library, University of Queensland. The interview was held in early April 1974 for the *This Day Tonight* television program. The interviewer was Richard Carleton.

## BOOKS

Albinski, Henry S. *The Australian Labor Party and the aid to parochial schools controversy*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1968.

Attlee, Clement. *A prime minister remembers: the war and post-war memoirs of the Rt Hon Earl Attlee*. London: Heinemann, 1961.

Australian Worker's Union. Queensland Branch. *The diamond jubilee of "The Worker", Australia's pioneer co-operative labour journal: souvenir number 1890-1950*. [Brisbane: no publisher, 1950?].

Australian Worker's Union. Queensland Branch. *The "Worker's" first seventy years: souvenir*. Brisbane: The Worker, 1960.

Bernays, Charles Arrowsmith. *Queensland politics during sixty (1859-1919) years*. Brisbane: Government Printer, 1919.

Bernays, Charles Arrowsmith. *Queensland – our seventh political decade*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1931.

Bjelke-Petersen, Joh. *Don't you worry about that!: the Joh Bjelke-Petersen memoirs*. North Ryde, NSW: Collins/Angus and Robertson, 1990.

Blackmur, Douglas. *Strikes: causes conduct consequences*. Sydney: Federation Press, 1993.

Blazey, Peter and Andrew Campbell. *The political dice men*. Canberra: Outback Press, 1974.

Boland, T P. *James Duhig*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1986.

Bowden, Brad. *A breed apart: the history of the Bacon Factories Union of Employees 1946-1996*. Moorooka, Q: Boolarong, 1996.

Bowden, Brad. *Driving force: the history of the Transport Worker's Union of Australia 1883-1992*. St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1993.

Brennan, Niall. *The politics of Catholics*. Melbourne: Hill Publishing, 1972.

Browne, Reginald Spencer. *A journalist's memories*. Brisbane: Read, 1927.

Burger, Angela. *Neville Bonner*. South Melbourne, Vic: Macmillan, 1979.

Calwell, Arthur Augustus. *Be just and fear not: the fearless memoirs of a great Labor leader*. Hawthorn, Vic.: Lloyd O'Neil, 1972.

Campion, Edmund. *Australian Catholics*. Melbourne: Penguin, 1987.

Campion, Edmund. *Rockchoppers: growing up Catholic in Australia*. Melbourne: Penguin, 1994.

Charlton, Peter. *Two flies up a wall: the Australian passion for gambling*. North Ryde, NSW: Methuen Haynes, 1987.

Clark, Colin. *Australian hopes and fears*. London: Hollis and Carter, 1958.

Coleman, Peter. *Obscenity blasphemy and sedition: 100 years of censorship in Australia*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1974.

Costar, Brian, Peter Love and Paul Strangio, eds. *The great Labor schism: a retrospective*. Carlton North, Vic: Scribe, 2005.

Cribb, Margaret Bridson and P J Boyce, eds. *Politics in Queensland: 1977 and beyond*. St Lucia, Q.: University of Queensland Press, 1980.

Crisp, L F. *Ben Chifley: a biography*. London: Longmans, 1970.

Crowley, F K. *Tough times: Australian in the seventies*. Melbourne: Heinemann Australia, 1986.

Daddow, Viv. *The puffing pioneers and Queensland's railway builders*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1975.

D'Alpuget, Blanche. *Robert J Hawke: a biography*. Melbourne: Schwartz, 1990

Daly, Fred. *From Curtin to Kerr*. Melbourne: Sun, 1977.

Davidson, Alistair. *The Communist Party of Australia: a short history*. Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1969.

Davidson, B R. *The northern myth: a study of the physical and economic limits to agricultural and pastoral development in tropical Australia*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1965.

Dawson, Archie A. *Points and politics: a history of the Electrical Trades Union in Queensland*. Brisbane: Colonial Press, 1977.

Dowsing, Irene. *Curtin of Australia*. Melbourne: Acacia, 1969.

Duffy, Gavan. *Demons and democrats: 1950s Labor at the crossroads*. North Melbourne, Vic.: Freedom Pub. Co, 2002.

Duncan, Bruce. *Crusade or conspiracy?: Catholics and the anti- Communist struggle in Australia*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2001.

Dunstan, Donald Allen. *Felicia, the political memoirs of Don Dunstan*. South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1986.

Duthie, Gil. *I had 50 000 bosses: memoirs of a Labor backbencher 1946-1975*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1984.

Evans, Gareth, ed. *Labor and the constitution, 1972-1975: essays and commentaries on the constitutional controversies of the Whitlam years in the Labor government*. London: Heinemann, 1977.

Fitzgerald, Ross. *From the dreaming to 1915*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1982.

Fitzgerald, Ross. *From 1915 to the early 1980s: a history of Queensland*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1984.

Fitzgerald, Ross. *The people's champion: Fred Paterson: Australia's only Communist Party member of Parliament*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1997.

Fitzgerald, Ross, with the assistance of Adam Carr and William J Dealy. *The pope's battalions: Santamaria, Catholics and the Labor split*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 2003.

Fitzgerald, Ross. *'Red Ted': the life of E G Theodore*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1994.

Fitzgerald, Ross and Harold Thornton, *Labor in Queensland: 1880 to 1988*, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1989.

Fogarty, Ronald. *Catholic education in Australia, 1806-1950*. 2v. Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Press, 1959.

Ford, Patrick P. *Cardinal Moran and the ALP: a study in the encounter between Moran and socialism, 1890-1907, its effects upon the Australian Labor Party, the foundation of Catholic social thought and action in Australia*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1966.

Freudenberg, Graham. *Cause for power: the official history of the New South Wales branch of the Australian Labor Party*. Sydney: Pluto Press, 1991.

Freudenberg, Graham. *A certain grandeur: Gough Whitlam in politics*. South Melbourne, Vic.: Sun, 1978.

Gollan, Robin. *Radical and working class politics: a study of Eastern Australia, 1850-1910*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1960.

Gollan, Robin. *Revolutionaries and reformists: Communism and the Australian labour movement 1920-1950*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1975.

Goodman, Rupert. *Secondary education in Queensland, 1860-1960*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1968.

Hanger, Thomas. *Sixty years in Queensland schools*. Sydney: Wentworth, 1963.

Harris, W Joe. *First steps: Queensland workers' moves towards political expression, 1857-1893*. Canberra: Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, 1966.

Hayden, W. *Hayden: an autobiography*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1986.

Hazelhurst, Cameron. *Gordon Chalk: a political biography*. Toowoomba, Q: Darling Downs Institute Press, 1987.

Hearn, Mark and Harry Knowles. *One big union: a history of the Australian Workers Union 1886-1994*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Henderson, Gerard. *Menzies's child: the Liberal party of Australia 1944-1994*. St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1994.

Henderson, Gerard. *Mr Santamaria and the bishops*. Sydney: Studies in the Christian Movement, 1993.

Holthouse, Hector. *Looking back: the first 150 years of Queensland schools*. Brisbane: Department of Education, 1975.

Howson, Peter *The Howson diaries: the life of politics*. Ringwood, Vic: Viking, 1984.

Huf, Liz, Lorna McDonald and David Myers, eds. *Sin, sweat and sorrow: the making of Capricornia, Queensland 1840s-1940*. Rockhampton: Central Queensland University Press, 1993.

Hughes, Colin A. *The government of Queensland*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980.

Hughes, Colin A. *A handbook of Australian government and politics, 1890-1964*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1968.

Hughes, Colin A. *A handbook of Australian government and politics, 1965-1974*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1975.

Hughes, Colin A. *Images and issues: the Queensland state elections of 1963 and 1966*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1969.

Hughes, Colin A and B D Graham. *Voting for the Queensland legislative assembly, 1890-1964*. Canberra: Department of Political Science, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, 1974.

Iremonger, John, et al (eds). *Strikes: studies in twentieth century Australian social history*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1973.

Johnston, W Ross and Margaret Zerner, compilers. *A guide to the history of Queensland*. Brisbane: Library Board of Queensland, 1985.

Kane, Jack. *Exploding the myths: the political memoirs of Jack Kane*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1989.

Kellett, John. *A fighting union: a history of the Queensland branch of the Transport Worker's Union, 1907-2000*. Moorooka, Q: Boolarong, 2000.

Kennedy, Kett. *The Mungana affair: state mining and political corruption in Queensland in the 1920s*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1978.

Kerr, John. *Triumph of narrow gauge: a history of Queensland railways*. Brisbane: Boolarong, 1990.

Kerr, John Robert (Sir). *Matters for judgment: an autobiography*. South Melbourne: Macmillan, 1978.

Killen, James (Sir). *Killen: inside Australian politics*. North Ryde, NSW: Methuen Hayes, 1985.

Lack, Clem. *Three decades of Queensland political history, 1929-1960*. Brisbane: Government Printer, [1962].

Larcombe, James. *Notes on the political history of the labour movement in Queensland*. Brisbane: Worker, 1934.

Lunn, Hugh. *Joh: the life and adventures of Johannes Bjelke-Petersen*. St Lucia, Q.: University of Queensland Press, 1978.

Lunn, Hugh. *Johannes Bjelke-Petersen: a political biography*. St Lucia, Q.: University of Queensland Press, 1984.

Lunn, Hugh. *Joh: the life and adventures of Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen*. St Lucia, Q.: University of Queensland Press, 1987.

Lunn, Hugh. *Working for Rupert*. Sydney: Hodder Headline Australia, 2001.

MacCallum, Mungo. *Mungo on the zoo plane: elections 1972-1977*. St Lucia, Q.: University of Queensland Press, 1979.

McClelland, James. *Stirring the possum – a political autobiography*. Ringwood, Vic.: Penguin, 1989.

McDonald, Lorna. *Rockhampton: a history of city and district*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1981.

MacGregor, Bruce. *The graduate of Nudgee Orphanage, Fred Newton: the Biography of a Trade Unionist and a Labor Politician*. Rochedale South, Q: The Author, 1991.

Macintyre, Stuart. *The Reds*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1998.

Mackerras, Malcolm. *The Australian Senate 1965-1967: who held control?* Sydney: Australian Political Studies Association, 1968.

Mackerras, Malcolm. *DLP preference distribution 1958-1969*. [Sydney]: Department of Government and Public Administration, University of Sydney, [1970]. Occasional Monograph (University of Sydney, Department of Government and Public Administration), no 3.

McManus, Frank. *The tumult and the shouting*. Adelaide: Rigby, 1977.

McMullin, Ross. *The light on the hill: the Australian Labor Party 1891-1991*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1991.

McNicoll, David. *Luck's a fortune: an autobiography*. Sydney: Wildcat Press, 1979.

Millar, T B. *Soviet policies in the Indian Ocean area* Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1970. (*Canberra papers on strategy and defence*, no 7.)

Miller, J B D. *Australian government and politics: an introductory survey*. London: Duckworth, 1979.

Mines, Frank. *Gair*. Canberra: Arrow, 1975.

Moles, Ian. *A majority of one: Tom Aikens and independent politics in Townsville*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1979.

Murphy, D J ed. *The big strikes: Queensland 1889-1965*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1983.

Murphy, Denis Joseph, ed. *Labor in politics: the state Labor parties in Australia, 1880-1920*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1975.

Murphy, D J, R B Joyce and C A Hughes, eds. *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland 1915-1957*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980.

Murphy, Denis Joseph, R B Joyce and Colin A Hughes, eds. *Prelude to power: the rise of the Labour Party in Queensland 1885-1915*. Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1970.

Murphy, D J and Roger Joyce, eds. *Queensland political portraits 1859-1952*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1978.

Murphy, D J, Roger Joyce and Margaret Cribb, eds. *The Premiers of Queensland*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1990.

Murphy, D J, Roger Joyce, Margaret Cribb and Rae Wear. *The Premiers of Queensland*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 2003.

Murphy, D J. *T J Ryan: a political biography*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1975.

Murray, Robert. *The split: Australian Labor in the fifties*. Melbourne: Cheshire, 1970.

Nolan, Frank. *You pass this way only once: reflections of a trade union leader*. Brisbane, Colonial Press, 1974.

Oakes, Laurie, and David Solomon. *Grab for power: election '74*. Melbourne: Cheshire, 1974.

Odgers, J R. *Australian Senate practice*. 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1976.

O'Farrell, Patrick. *The Catholic Church and community in Australia*. West Melbourne, Vic: Thomas Nelson (Australia), 1977.

O'Farrell, Patrick, ed. *Documents in Australian catholic history*. 2v. London: G Chapman, 1969.

O'Farrell, Patrick. *The Irish in Australia*. Kensington, NSW: New South Wales University Press, 1986.

O'Lincoln, Tom. *Into the mainstream: the decline of Australian Communism*. Westgate, NSW: Stained Wattle Press, 1985.

Ormonde, Paul. *The movement*. Melbourne: Nelson, 1972.

Parkin, Andrew and John Warhurst, eds. *Machine politics in the Australian Labor Party*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1983.

*Pattern of deceit: the NCC and the Labor movement*. Melbourne: Committee to Defend the Victorian ALP, 1981.

Petrie, Andrew Lang. *Reminiscences of Mr A L Petrie for 33 years a member of the Legislative Assembly for Toombul and 'Father' of the Assembly*. Brisbane: Daily Mail, 1926.

Powell, J M. *Plains of promise: rivers of destiny: water management and the development of Queensland 1824-1990*. Brisbane: Boolarong, 1991.

Pringle, John Douglas Pringle. *Australian accent*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1958.

Rawson, D W *Australia votes: the 1958 Federal election*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1961.

Reid, Alan. *The Gorton experiment*. Sydney: Shakespeare Head Press, 1971.

Reid, Alan. *The Whitlam venture*. Melbourne: Hill of Content, 1976.

Reynolds, P L. *The Democratic Labor Party*. Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1974.

Richards, Lyn. *Displaced politics: refugee migrants in the Australian political context*. Bundoora, Vic: Department of Sociology, La Trobe University, 1978. (La Trobe Sociology Papers no 45.)

Richardson, Graham. *Whatever it takes*. Sydney: Bantam, 1994.

Santamaria, B A. *Against the tide*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1981.

Santamaria, B A. *Daniel Mannix: the quality of leadership*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1984.

Santamaria, B A. "The Movement" 1941-60: an outline. Melbourne: Hawthorn Press, [1961?].

Santamaria, B A *The politics of 1966*. Melbourne: Hawthorn Press, 1966.

Santamaria, B A. *The price of freedom: the Movement after ten years*. Melbourne: Campion Press, 1964.

Santamaria, B A. *Santamaria: a memoir*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Santamaria, B A. *Spotlight on Santamaria: a commentary on the present and future of Australia*. Melbourne: Hawthorn Press, 1960.

Santamaria, B A. "State aid" in perspective. Melbourne: Hawthorn Press, 1966.

Saunders, Kay. *War on the homefront: state intervention in Queensland, 1938-1948*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1993.

Scott, Joanne, Ross Laurie, Bronwyn Stevens and Patrick Weller. *The engine room of government: the Queensland Premier's department 1859-2001*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 2001.

Sharkey, L L. *An outline history of the Communist Party of Australia*. Sydney: Marx School, 1944.

Sharpley, C. *The great delusion*. London: Heinemann, 1952.

Sheppard, A W (ed). *Catholic Action and Australian labor: a frank commentary on some of the methods by which Catholic Action is subverting the true cause of Labor*. Sydney: Morgan's Publications, [195-].

Sheridan, Tom. *Division of labour: industrial relations in the Chifley years, 1945-1949*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Spaull, Andrew and Martin G Sullivan. *A history of the Queensland Teacher's Union*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989.

Strangman, Denis. *The formation of the Democratic Labor Party in New South Wales*. Sydney: Democratic Labor Party (NSW branch): 1962.

Thomas, Pete. *The coalminers of Queensland: a narrative history of the Queensland Colliery Employees Union: Volume 1: creating the traditions*. Ipswich, Q: Queensland Colliery Employees Union, 1986.

Townsend, Derek. *Jigsaw: the biography of Joh Bjelke-Petersen: statesman, not politician*. Brisbane: Sneyd and Morley, 1983.

Trollope, Anthony. *Australia*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1967.

Truman, Tom. *Ideological groups in the Australian Labor Party and their attitudes*. University of Queensland Papers. Department of History and Political Science, vol 1 no 2. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1965.

Truman, Tom. *Catholic action and politics* Melbourne: Georgian House, 1959.

Turner, Naomi. *Catholics in Australia: a social history*. 2v. North Blackburn, Vic: Collins Dove, 1992.

Walter, James. *The leader: a political biography of Gough Whitlam*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980.

Waters, Frank. *Postal unions and politics: a history of the Amalgamated Postal Workers'; Union of Australia*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1978.

Waterson, D B. *A biographical register of the Queensland parliament, 1860-1929*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1972.

Waterson, D B and John Arnold. *Biographical register of the Queensland parliament 1930-1980 with an outline atlas of Queensland electorates*, Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1982.

Wear, Rae. *Johannes Bjelke-Petersen: the Lord's Premier*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2002.

Webb, Leicester. *Communism and democracy in Australia: a survey of the 1951 referendum*. Melbourne: Cheshire, 1954.

Whittington, Don and Rob Chalmers. *Inside Canberra: a guide to Australian federal politics* Adelaide: Rigby, 1971.

Whitlam, Gough. *The truth of the matter*. Ringwood, Vic: Penguin, 1979.

Woodward, Jack. *Knights of the Southern Cross: the Queensland story*. [Brisbane: Knights of the Southern Cross], 1984.

Wyeth, E R. *Education in Queensland*. Melbourne, Australian Council for Educational Research, 1955.

Yadav, R S. *From ideology to pragmatism: a study of Soviet and Russian policy towards the Indian Ocean*. Kurukshetra: Nirmal Book Agency, 1995.

## GOVERNMENT SOURCES

The following official publications of the Queensland and Australian governments were mined for Gair material, in some cases for decades. All references are footnoted in the text.

*Commonwealth parliamentary debates*. House of Representatives.  
*Commonwealth parliamentary debates*. Senate.  
*Queensland government gazette*.  
*Queensland parliamentary debates*.  
 Queensland. Legislative Assembly. *Details of polling at general election*. 1929-1966.  
*Queensland parliamentary papers*.  
*Queensland post office directories*.

## **PARTY DOCUMENTS, UNPUBLISHED**

[Australian Labor Party]. 'Report of Election Campaign: 1957', Denis J Murphy Collection, UQFL129, Fryer Library, University of Queensland.

Cole, G R 'Joint DLP – QLP Policy Speech', 1961. Held John Oxley Library.

Democratic Labor Party. "For a Safe and Prosperous Australia": the Policy of the Democratic Labor Party for the Federal Elections November 26, 1966.' Gair Papers, Series 7 Box 7 Elections Folder 60, National Library of Australia.

Gair, V C. [Letter, undated, on Queensland Labor Party letterhead, probably 1960, soliciting funds 'to enable us to place our Christian, Democratic policy before the people of the state.] DLP Papers, John Oxley Library. OMR 113.

Judge, R J . '[Queensland Labor Party] Secretary's Report: 3.7.63' DLP Papers, John Oxley Library. OMR 113.

'Minutes of Conference Between Delegates of ADLP and QLP Held in Anzac House, College Street, Sydney 29<sup>th</sup> September – 1<sup>st</sup> October 1961.' DLP Collection, MS 10389 B/2/10, DLP-QLP Folder, State Library of Victoria.

'Policy Speech of the Queensland Labor Party delivered by Hon V C Gair, MLA, Premier of Queensland at City Hall, Brisbane, 8<sup>th</sup> July 1957.' Brisbane: [QLP] [1957.]

'Policy Speech of the Queensland Labor Party Delivered by Hon V C Gair, MLA at Festival Hall, Brisbane 9<sup>th</sup> May, 1960.' DLP Papers John Oxley Library. OMR 113.

'Policy Speech of the Queensland Labor Party (In Association With the Democratic Labor Party) Delivered by Hon V C Gair at the City Hall, Brisbane 13<sup>th</sup> November, 1961.' Gair Papers, Series 7 Box 7 Elections Folder 60, National Library of Australia.

'Queensland ALP Industrial Groups Rules and Constitution', Gair Papers, Series 7 Box 7 Elections Folder 61, National Library of Australia.

'Queensland Labor Party: Decisions of Inaugural State Conference in November, 1957 Which Was Continued in March, 1958.' DLP Papers, John Oxley Library. OMR 113/77.

'[Queensland Labor Party]. Inaugural State Conference of the Queensland Labor Party Held at November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, 1957, at the Fine Arts Pavilion (RNA Showground), Brisbane', DLP Papers, John Oxley Library. OMR 113/80.

[Queensland Labor Party] Meeting of Executive and Central Council Queensland Labor Party Held at Headquarters on Wednesday, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1963 at 7.30 pm.' DLP Papers, John Oxley Library. OMR 113.

'[Queensland Labor Party] Minutes of Meeting of No 1 Regional Conference Held at the Danish Hall, Stones Corner, Brisbane, on Sunday, 19<sup>th</sup> July 1959.' DLP Papers, John Oxley Library, OMR 113/79.

'[Queensland Labor Party] Minutes of Meeting of Executive and Central Council of the Queensland Labor Party Held at Headquarters on Wednesday October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1963', DLP Papers, John Oxley Library. OMR 113.

'[Queensland Labor Party] Minutes of Meeting of Queensland Labor Party, Central Council, Held at Headquarters on Wednesday, 24<sup>th</sup> August, 1960.' DLP Papers, John Oxley Library. OMR 113.

'[Queensland Labor Party] Minutes of No 1 Regional Conference, Queensland Labor Party Held on 10<sup>th</sup> June, 1958, at Danish Hall, Stones Corner.' DLP Papers, John Oxley Library, OMR 113/79. [Handwritten.]



'[Queensland Labor Party] Minutes of the Meeting of the Central Council of the Queensland Labor Party Held at Brisbane on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, 28<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> March, 1958.' DLP Papers, John Oxley Library. OMR 113/78.

'[Queensland Labor Party]. No 1 Regional Conference – Queensland Labor Party to be Held in Danish Hall, Stones Corner, Brisbane at 10.15 am Sunday, 19<sup>th</sup> July 1959', DLP Papers, John Oxley Library. OMR 113/75.

'Queensland Labor Party. No 1 Regional Conference. Held Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> August, 1962. Agenda', DLP Papers, John Oxley Library. OMR 113/75.

'[Queensland Labor Party] Report of the Second General Conference of the Queensland Labor Party Held at Rockhampton on 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> November 1959', DLP Papers, John Oxley Library. OMR 113/75.

'[Queensland Labor Party] Report of No 1 Regional Conference Held at Stone's Corner on Sunday, 13<sup>th</sup> October 1957 From 9.30 am to 5.30 pm', DLP Papers, John Oxley Library. OMR 113/72.

'[Queensland Labor Party] Resolutions Carried at Meeting of Central Council Held on 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> March, 1958.' DLP Papers, John Oxley Library. OMR 113.

'[Queensland Labor Party] State General Conference QLP 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> November, 1962', DLP Papers, John Oxley Library, OMR 113/80.

'Queensland Labor Party: Statement of Principles', Unpublished typescript, 1957. Gair Papers, Series 7 Box 7 Elections Folder 61, National Library of Australia.

'Terms and Conditions for the Integration of the ACP and the DLP in Queensland Agreed Upon by Representatives of the Two Parties, Subject to Ratification by Their Respective State Conferences', Unpublished typescript, 1973. John Oxley Library.

## **PAMPHLETS**

Note: Here are included works of fewer than 100 pages that are of a polemical, political or propaganda nature.

Australian Labor Party Industrial Group – Postal Worker's Section. *To the members of the Amalgamated Postal Workers' Union*. No date, early 1950s.

Amalgamated Postal Worker's Union. *The attitude of the APWU to ALP Industrial Groups* Brisbane: Amalgamated Postal Workers' Union, 1949? Frank Waters papers, photocopy held by author.

Australian Labor Party. Queensland Branch. *Campaign manual state elections 1953*. Brisbane: Australian Labor Party, Queensland Central Executive, [1953]. Parliamentary Library.

Australian Labor Party. Queensland Branch. *Campaign manual state elections 1956*. Brisbane: Australian Labor Party, Queensland Central Executive, [1956]. Fryer Library.

Australian Labor Party. Queensland Branch. *Let's look at the record*. [The Labor government and education in Queensland], Brisbane: Queensland Central Executive of the Australian Labor Party, 1956.

Australian Labor Party. Victorian Central Executive. *What happened at Hobart*. [Melbourne]: The Party, [1955.]

Calwell, Arthur. *The challenge before us: five speeches*. Canberra: C S Wyndham, 1964.

*Catholic Action at work*. Sydney: Australian Communist Party, 194?. Held Fryer Library, University of Queensland.

Catholic Church. Standing Committee of the Catholic Bishops of Australia. *Peace in industry: official statement of the Standing Committee of the Catholic Bishops of Australia*. [Carnegie, Vic.]: The Committee, [193-]. Held Fryer Library, University of Queensland.

Dash, John H. *Legislative and administrative action of the Labor government and the Railway Department from 18 June 1932 to 28 February 1938: what Labor has promised Labor has done*, [Brisbane], Government Printer, 1938. In Australian Labor Party records, John Oxley Library, Brisbane, OMEQ 58/3.

Democratic Labor Party. “*For a safe and prosperous Australia*”: *the policy of the Democratic Labor Party for the Federal Elections November 26, 1966*. Gair Papers, Series 7 Box 7 Elections Folder 60, National Library of Australia.

Democratic Labor Party. *Preferential voting and the DLP: information every voter should know*. Brisbane: DLP, 1969? DLP Papers, John Oxley Library, OMR 113/30.

Dixon, R. (Reginald). *Labour in Queensland*. Brisbane: Communist Party, 1937.

*The Egerton story*. [Brisbane?, no publisher, 1952?].

*Electors of South Brisbane! Gair's fight is your fight! Stand by Labor's man of destiny!* Gair Papers, Series 7 Elections Box 7 Folder 61. National Library of Australia.

*Electors of South Brisbane: Returned Soldiers are Grateful to Mr Gair*, Gair Papers, Series 12 Box 14, National Library of Australia.

Gair, Ellen. *Message to the women of South Brisbane from Mrs V C Gair*. [Brisbane: Queensland Labor Party, 1960.] Gair Papers, Series 7 Elections Box 7 Folder 55. Dated 24 May 1960.

Gair, V C. *The forgotten north; Premier Gair exposes Canberra's neglect*, Brisbane: Queensland Central Executive of the Australian Labor Party, 1954.

Gair, V C. *In Goebbel's footsteps*. [South Brisbane, Q., The Author, 1957?].

Gair, V C. *The issue – Evatt-Bukowski dictatorship or democratic government*. [South Brisbane, Q: The Author, 1957.]

Gair, V C. *Labor's great record of progress and development: policy speech delivered at the City Hall, Brisbane, on April 24, 1956 by the Hon V C Gair, MLA, Premier of Queensland and leader of the Labor Party* Brisbane: Queensland Central Executive of the Australian Labor Party, [1956]. Fryer Library.

Gair, V C. *Star Chamber revived!* [South Brisbane, Q: The Author, 1957.]

Gair, V C. *Then and now: the story of the decline in AWU leadership*. [Brisbane]: V C Gair [1957].

Gair, V C. *My message to the electors of South Brisbane* [1935 election pamphlet]. Gair Papers Series 7 Elections Series Box 7 Folder 54. National Library of Australia.

*Here are the facts on aid for independent schools*, Melbourne: DLP, 1964. Copy in Gair Papers, Series 7 Box 7 Elections Folder 60, National Library of Australia.

*Here is positive proof of Communist influence in the Australian Labor Party*, Brisbane: Queensland Labor Party, 1963. DLP Papers, John Oxley Library.

Higgins, John. *Without apology!*, [on unwarranted church interference in politics], Brisbane: Worker, [1957.] Reprinted from *Downs star* [Toowoomba] 10 June 1957.

Hilton, Paul. *“The shadow of a dictator” broadcast by the Minister of Public Lands ... on June 9-10 '57* [Brisbane: Queensland Labor Party, 1957]. Held National Library of Australia.

Kane, J T. *Origins and role of the DLP* Sydney: DLP, 1965.

Mortier, Paul. *Danger: NCC at work*, Sydney: Current Book Distributors, 1962.

*Mr Walsh and Mr Gair stand exposed and denounced by their very own words*. Brisbane: Australian Labor Party, [1957.]

*People of Queensland! whether you are a Labor supporter or not ... this is important to you!*. [Pamphlet defending and outlining reasons for Gair’s expulsion] Brisbane: Worker, [1957.]

*Postal workers! do you want Catholic Action to control the APWU?* Brisbane: no publisher, 1954?. Frank Waters Papers, photocopy held by author.

*The price of liberty is eternal vigilance: beware of the sectarian devil*. Brisbane: Worker, 1938?. [Australian Labor Party pamphlet warning against the Protestant Labor Party.] Held John Oxley Library.

Queensland Labor Party. *Safeguard ... your social and industrial security!* Brisbane: Queensland Labor Party, 1957. Held in National Library of Australia.

Queensland Labor Party. *Your child’s future*. Brisbane: Queensland Labor Party, 1957. Held in National Library of Australia.

*Santamaria unmasked! master-mind behind Industrial Groups: cloak and stiletto methods exposed*. Melbourne, AFULE, Victorian Branch, [1954].

[Santamaria, B A] *Nine reasons why Australians won’t have Communism*.

*Sensational exposure: the truth about Grouper Walsh’s ‘Zinovieff Letter’*. Brisbane: ALP, 1957. Fryer Library Collection.

Smith, William Forgan. *State elections – 1935. My message to You as leader of the Labor Party*. Brisbane: Worker, [1935]. Fryer Library, University of Queensland.

*Something to grin about*. [Australian Labor Party pamphlet on health, Queensland state election, 1956], Brisbane: ALP, 1956.

*The story of one man’s work*. [Gair election brochure, 1960]. Gair Papers, Series 7, Box 7, Election Folder 60.

*Who is this Bukowski?* Brisbane: ALP, 1957. Fryer Library, University of Queensland.

*Who is this Duggan?* Brisbane: ALP, 1957. John Oxley Library.

*‘Why Gair Was Expelled!* Brisbane: Australian Labor Party, 1957. DLP collection, John Oxley Library.

Wyndham, Cyril S. *The National Civic Council*. Canberra: Australian Labor Party, 1965.

## UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPTS

Blackmur, Douglas (1994) ‘The Australian Communist Party in Queensland: 1940-1950.’ Paper for Conference: Celebration of a Rebel Parliamentarian, The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the election of Fred Paterson. Parliamentary Annexe, Brisbane, 16 April 1994. Copy held in John Oxley Library.

Boilermakers’ Society of Australia. Queensland District Committee. ‘Crisis in the ALP’, Denis Murphy Papers, Box 73, Fryer Library, University of Queensland.

‘The Facts About Industrial Groupism’, typescript, no author, no publisher, no date. Frank Waters Papers, photocopy held by author.

[Queensland Parliamentary Library] 'Chronological Record of Labor Faction Fight and Other Relevant Matters, With Particular Relevance to Queensland', DLP Papers, John Oxley Library. OMR 113/53.

Moroney, Tim. 'The Queensland ALP 'Split' of 1957', unpublished Information Request Resume, Queensland Parliamentary Library Research and Reference Service, 6 October 1983.

Stevenson, Brian. '“We Shall Do Our Best Within the Limits of Our Financial Resources”': The Gair Labor Government and Education in Queensland, 1952-1957', unpublished paper, copies lodged with John Oxley Library, Parliamentary Library and Educational History Unit, Department of Education.

Swan, Geoffrey James. 'The Last God Director General? A Triumph for Mediocrity? Herbert George Watkin (1896-1966) Director General of Education, Queensland 1952-1964.' Paper presented at the Australian and New Zealand History of Education Society Annual Conference 2000 and sponsored by Monash University and the University of Melbourne.

## **THESES**

Blackmur, Douglas. 'Industrial Relations Under an Australian State Labor Government: the Hanlon Government in Queensland 1946-1952', Ph D Thesis, 1986.

Carroll, Brian Murray. 'The Premiership of William Forgan Smith', Master of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1966.

Connole, P F. 'History of the Christian Brothers in secondary education in Queensland, 1875-1965.' Master of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1965.

Costar, Brian. 'Political and Social Aspects of the Great Depression in Queensland, 1929-1932', Master of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1973.

Costar, Brian. 'Labor, Politics and Unemployment: Queensland During the Great Depression', Ph D Thesis, University of Queensland, 1981.

Cribb, Margaret N Bridson. 'Some Manifestations of Ideological Conflict Within the Labour Movement in Queensland (1924 to 1929).' Bachelor of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1964.

Cribb, Margaret N Bridson. 'Trade Union Militancy: Case Studies in Transport'. Master of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1972.

Droughton, Margaret Jill. 'The University of Queensland Acts Amendment Act of 1957: a Case Study', M Pub Admin Thesis, University of Queensland, 1977.

Fleming, Jenny. 'New Governments in Queensland: Industrial Relations, 1957-1961, 1989-1990', Ph D Thesis, Griffith University, 1998.

Gibson, David Andrew. 'The Right Hon. Francis M Forde P C: His Life and Times', Bachelor of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1973.

Guyatt, Joy. 'Trade Unions and the Australian Labor Party in Queensland, 1947-1957'. Master of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1971.

Hamill, David. 'Industrial Group activity in Queensland: a case study of the Electrical Trades Union.' Bachelor of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1971.

Jackson, W J. 'The Government and Economic Growth in Queensland, 1946-1952', Bachelor of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1968.

Kluver, John Barry. 'Aspects of the Development of Electoral Law and Practices Within Queensland from 1859 to 1970', Bachelor of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1970.

McGinley M E R. 'Catholicism in Queensland: a Social History 1910-1935', Ph D Thesis, University of Queensland, 1982.

McMurchy, Anne. 'The Queensland shearers strike of 1956', Bachelor of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1977.

Scott, Joanne. 'Don't Cop It Passively': Strikes, Lockouts and Unemployed Protest in Queensland, 1929-1939.' Bachelor of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1990.

Shearman, Richard. 'The Politics of the 1948 Railway Strike.' Bachelor of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1973.

Sorbello, Leonardo. 'The Democratic Labor Party: a Profile of a Minority Party.' Bachelor of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1970.

Stevenson, Brian F. 'The Political Career of Sir Francis Nicklin, 1932 – 1968.' Bachelor of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1983.

Sullivan, Martin G. 'Dissent in the Labor Party, 1938 to 1944.' Bachelor of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1968.

Swan, Geoffrey James. 'From Segregation to Integration: The Development of Special Education in Queensland.' Ph D Thesis, University of Queensland, 1996.

Swan, Wayne. 'Factionalism in the Case of Queensland Labor, 1959-1966.' Bachelor of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1975.

Thompson, Michael J. 1965. 'The Political Career of William Forgan Smith – as it Influenced Economic and Political Development in Queensland', B A Thesis, University of Queensland.

Truman, T C. 'The Pressure Groups, Parties and Politics of the Australian Labor Movement', Master of Arts Thesis, University of Queensland, 1957.

Wanka, K J. 'William Kidston: A Political Biography', B A Fourth Year Thesis, University of Queensland, 1962.

Webster, Barbara. 'Fighting the Grand Cause: a History of the Trade Union Movement in Rockhampton, 1907-1957', Ph D Thesis, Central Queensland University, Rockhampton, 1999.

Young, Stephanie K. 'The Protestant Labor Party.' Bachelor of Arts Thesis, 1971.

## BOOK CHAPTERS

Blackmur, Douglas. 'The Meat Industry Strike, 1946', in D J Murphy, ed. *The big strikes: Queensland 1889-1965*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1983.

Blackmur, Douglas. 'The Railway Strike, 1948', in D J Murphy, ed. *The big strikes: Queensland 1889-1965*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1983.

Carroll, Brian. 'William Forgan Smith: Dictator or Democrat?', in D J Murphy, Roger Joyce, Margaret Cribb and Rae Wear, eds. *The Premiers of Queensland*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 2003.

Costar, Brian. 'Arthur Edward Moore: Odd Man In', in D J Murphy, Roger Joyce, Margaret Cribb and Rae Wear, eds. *The Premiers of Queensland*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 2003.

Costar, Brian. 'Brisbane or Prague? The 1912 and 1948 Strikes' in *Brisbane retrospect: eight aspects of Brisbane history*. Brisbane: Library Board of Queensland, 1978.

Costar, Brian. '“For the Love of Christ, Mick, Don't Hit Him”': The Split in Queensland', in Brian Costar, Peter Love and Paul Strangio, eds. *The great Labor schism: a retrospective* Melbourne: Scribe, 2005.

Costar, Brian. 'Labor and the Depression', in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and C A Hughes, eds. *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland, 1915-57*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980.

Costar, Brian. 'Was the DLP a Labor or Centrist Party?' Brian Costar, Peter Love and Paul Strangio, eds. *The great Labor schism: a retrospective* Melbourne: Scribe, 2005.

Costar, Brian. 'Vincent Clair Gair: Labor's Loser' in D J Murphy, Roger Joyce, Margaret Cribb and Rae Wear, eds. *The Premiers of Queensland*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 2003.

Cotterell, Barry. 'The Machinery of Government', in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and C A Hughes, eds. *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland, 1915-57*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980.

Cribb, Margaret Bridson. 'Ideological Conflict: The 1927 and 1948 Strikes', in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and C A Hughes, eds. *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland, 1915-57*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980.

Duncan, Bruce. 'The Puzzle of Santamaria's Politicisation of Catholic Movements', in Brian Costar, Peter Love and Paul Strangio, eds. *The great Labor schism: a retrospective* Melbourne: Scribe, 2005.

Fox, S K. 'The Protestant Labour Party', in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and C A Hughes, eds. *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland, 1915-57*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980.

Gill, Rosemary. 'Thomas Joseph Byrnes: The Man and The Legend', in Denis Murphy, Roger Joyce and Margaret Cribb, eds. *The Premiers of Queensland*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1990.

Goot, Murray. 'Fudging the Figures: The Split in the Polls, 1955-1975', Brian Costar, Peter Love and Paul Strangio, eds. *The great Labor schism: a retrospective* Melbourne: Scribe, 2005.

Guyatt, Joy. 'The Affiliation of Unions: A Study of Four Unions, 1947-1957', in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and C A Hughes, eds. *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland, 1915-57*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980.

Hanks, P J. 'Parliamentarians and the Electorate', in Evans, Gareth, ed. *Labor and the constitution, 1972-1975: essays and commentaries on the constitutional controversies of the Whitlam years in the Labor government*. London: Heinemann, 1977.

Haeusler, Peter. 'Living with Hope and Fear: Advancing Catholic Social Ideals Amid the Spectre of Communism', in Brian Costar, Peter Love and Paul Strangio, eds. *The great Labor schism: a retrospective* Melbourne: Scribe, 2005.

Hughes, Colin A. 'Labor in the Electorates', in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and C A Hughes, eds. *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland, 1915-57*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980.

Kennedy, Kett. 'The Anti- Communist Pledge Crisis', in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and C A Hughes, eds. *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland, 1915-57*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980.

Kennedy, Kett. 'Mining', in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and C A Hughes, eds. *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland, 1915-57*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980.

Kennedy, Kett. 'William McCormack: Forgotten Labour Leader', in D J Murphy, Roger Joyce, Margaret Cribb and Rae Wear, eds. *The Premiers of Queensland*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 2003.

Knight, Kenneth W. 'Edward Michael Hanlon: A City Bushman', in D J Murphy, Roger Joyce, Margaret Cribb and Rae Wear, eds. *The Premiers of Queensland*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 2003.

Laverty, J R. 'The Queensland Economy 1860-1915', in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and Colin A Hughes, *Prelude to power: the rise of the Labour Party in Queensland 1885-1915*. Brisbane: Jacaranda, 1970.

Law, C G. 'Sugar Bag Days: the 1930s Depression in Brisbane', in *Brisbane retrospect: eight aspects of Brisbane history*. Brisbane: Library Board of Queensland, 1978.

Love, Peter. 'The Great Labor Split of 1955: An Overview', Brian Costar, Peter Love and Paul Strangio, eds. *The great Labor schism: a retrospective* Melbourne: Scribe, 2005.

McMurchy, Anne. 'The Pastoral Strike, 1956', in D J Murphy, ed. *The big strikes: Queensland 1889-1965*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1983.

Murphy, D J. 'Agriculture, 1932-1957', in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and C A Hughes, eds. *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland, 1915-57*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980.

Murphy, D J 'The Changing Structure of the [Labor] Party', in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and Colin A Hughes, *Prelude to power: the rise of the Labour Party in Queensland 1885-1915*. Brisbane: Jacaranda, 1970.

Murphy, D J. 'Labor Relations - Issues', in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and C A Hughes, eds. *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland, 1915-57*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980.

Murphy, D J. 'Organisation, Structure and Finance', in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and C A Hughes, eds. *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland, 1915-57*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980.

Murphy, D J. 'State Enterprises', in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and C A Hughes, eds. *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland, 1915-57*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980.

Murphy, D J. 'William Kidston: A Tenacious Reformer', in D J Murphy, Roger Joyce, Margaret Cribb and Rae Wear, eds. *The Premiers of Queensland*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 2003.

Murphy, D J. 'The 1957 Split: "A Drop in the Ocean in Political History"', in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and C A Hughes, eds. *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland, 1915-57*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980.

Parker, R. 'Public Service Neutrality: A Moral Problem: The Creighton Case', in B B Schaffer and D C Corbett, eds. *Decisions: case studies in Australian administration*. Melbourne: Cheshire in association with the Australian Regional Groups of the Royal Institute of Public Administration, 1965.

Reekie, Gail. 'Naming Queensland Women's History: A Bibliographic Essay', in Gair Reekie, ed. *On the edge: women's experiences of Queensland* St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1993.

- Reynolds, Paul. 'The Democratic Labor Party: A Retrospective', Brian Costar, Peter Love and Paul Strangio, eds. *The great Labor schism: a retrospective* Melbourne: Scribe, 2005.
- Santamaria, B A. 'Catholic Action', section of *Australian encyclopedia* article on 'Roman Catholic Church', Sydney: Grolier, 1963.
- Sheridan, Tom. 'The Trade Unions and Postwar Reconstruction', in Ann Curthoys and John Merritt, *Australia's first Cold War, 1945-1959: volume 2: Better dead than red*. Sydney: George Allen and Unwin, 1984.
- Stevenson, Brian F. 'George Francis Reuben Nicklin: 'Honest Frank': The Gentleman Premier', in D J Murphy, Roger Joyce, Margaret Cribb and Rae Wear, eds. *The Premiers of Queensland*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 2003.
- Strangio, Paul. 'The Split: A Victorian Phenomenon', in Brian Costar, Peter Love and Paul Strangio, eds. *The great Labor schism: a retrospective* Melbourne: Scribe, 2005.
- Strangio, Paul and Brian Costar. 'B A Santamaria: Religion as Politics', in Brian Costar, Peter Love and Paul Strangio, eds. *The great Labor schism: a retrospective* Melbourne: Scribe, 2005.
- Sullivan, M G. 'The Expulsion of George Cuthbert Taylor', in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and C A Hughes, eds. *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland, 1915-57*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980.
- Warhurst, John. 'Was the DLP a 'Church' Party?', Brian Costar, Peter Love and Paul Strangio, eds. *The great Labor schism: a retrospective* Melbourne: Scribe, 2005.
- Wiltshire, Kenneth. 'Public Finance', in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and C A Hughes, eds. *Labor in power: the Labor Party and governments in Queensland, 1915-57*. St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980.

## JOURNAL AND NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

(NOTE: As well as journal articles, this section also includes important articles in newspapers, and publications that combine features of both newspapers and journals. Among the latter are *The worker*, *Australian Financial Review* and the National Civic Council organ, *News Weekly*. For other uses of these publications, see footnote citations in main text. Obviously not every newspaper article viewed or even cited is included in this bibliography. On the other hand, I have listed more than is usual in works of this kind. The criterion for inclusion is that the item adds in a substantive way to knowledge of Gair, the Queensland Labor Party or the Democratic Labor Party.)

- Ackland, Richard. 'Gough Whitlam's Irish Problem', *Australian Financial Review* 4 April 1974.
- Aitkin, Don. 'The 1969 Federal Election', *Politics* vol 5 no 1, May 1970.
- Aitkin, Don. 'Tracking Down the DLP Voter', *Australian Quarterly* v 44 no 3, September 1972.
- Aitkin, Don, Michael Kahan and Sue Barnes, 'What Happened to the Depression Generation?', *Labour History* no 17, 1969.
- 'Ald Bennett Selected to Fight Mr Gair in South Brisbane', *Courier-Mail* 22 December 1959.



Alford, R. 'Catholicism and Australian Politics', *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* vol 6 no 1, 1961.

Allan, Lyle. 'The Democratic Labor Party: Was It an Ethnic Party?', *Recorder* April 1985.

Allan, Lyle. 'Irish Ethnicity and the Democratic Labor Party', *Politics* vol 23 no 2, November 1988.

Allen, Geoff. 'Ambassador Tells of His Hopes and Future', *Sun-Herald* (Sydney) 21 July 1974.

Allen, Ric. '“Old Fox” Had a Quick, Acid Wit', *Sunday Mail* 16 December 1980.

'An Analysis of the DLP', *Tharunka* 11 October 1963.

Anderson, Ross. 'Labor Areas in Rural Queensland are Specially Weighted', *Voice* March 1956.

Arndt, H W and B A Santamaria, 'The Catholic Social Movement', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol 2, May 1956.

'Australian Political Chronicle', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 1955-. This is a regular feature in this journal. As well as covering Australia, there is a section for each state.

Bacon, E A. 'Develop Queensland – Get Rid of Menzies', *Communist Review* July 1958.

Bacon, E A. 'Fight For Working Class Unity in Queensland', *Communist Review* January 1950.

Bacon, E A. 'Hanlon Can't Cow Queensland Workers', *Communist Review* April 1948.

Baker, Jill. 'McManus, DLP Founder and Anti- Communist, Dies at 78', *Age* 30 December 1983.

Barron, Peter. 'Vince Might Be the Bloody Lightweight ... In His Own DLP', *Sunday Mail* 30 September 1973.

Beazley, Kim E 'Labor and Foreign Policy', *Australian Outlook* vol 20 no 2 1966.

Beecher, Eric. 'An Old Fire Horse Sees Sparks and Longs to Act' [Gair], *Age* 6 December 1977.

Benn, K M. 'Donkey Vote Devaluation and the DLP', *Politics* vol 5 no 2, November 1970.

Berry, David. 'Government Bid: “Keep Gair Alive”', *Courier-Mail* 14 February 1960.

Blackie, Tony. 'At 78, Vincent Gair Still Has a Lot to Say', *Sun-Herald* 6 May 1979.

Blackmur, Douglas. 'Arbitration, Legislation and Industrial Peace: Queensland in the Reconstruction Years', *Labour History* no 63 November 1992.

Blackmur, Douglas. 'The ALP Industrial Groups in Queensland', *Labour History* no 46, May 1984.

F A Bland, 'Unemployment relief in Australia', *International Labour Review* vol 30 no 1, July 1934.

Brennan, Niall. 'The March of the Militants', *Quadrant* Autumn, 1958.

Brown, Wallace. 'Gair Boosts DLP Stature in F111 Row', *Courier-Mail* 21 September 1968.

Brown, Wallace. 'Gair Stuns the Liberals', *Courier-Mail* 9 August 1973.

Brown, Wallace. 'McManus: A Man They Hate and Fear', *Courier-Mail* 11 October 1973.

Bryan, Harrison. 'The State and the University: Some Reflections on the First Fifty Years of the University of Queensland, 1909-59', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* vol 29 no 2, 1983.

[Buckley, Vincent, Tom Butler and others.] 'The Movement – Its Origins, Aliases, Decline', *Catholic Worker* July 1959. (See Bruce Duncan's *Crusade or conspiracy: Catholics and the anti Communist struggle in Australia*, p 366, for the authorship of this important article.)

Bulbeck, Chilla. 'Colin Clark and the Greening of Queensland: the Influence of a Senior Public Servant on Queensland Economic Development 1938 to 1952', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* v 33 no 1, 1987.

Cahill, A E 'Catholicism and Socialism: the 1905 Controversy in Australia', *Journal of Religious History* vol 1 no 2, December 1960.

Campbell, Ian. 'ALP Industrial Groups – a Reassessment', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, November 1962.

Campion, Edmund. 'The Church and State of Politics' [review of Paul Ormonde's *The Movement*] *Bulletin* 23 September 1972.

Campion, Edmund. 'The Santamaria Movement: a Question of Loyalties', *Working Papers in Australian Studies* no 83, 1992/93.

'Can We Afford It? – Unions Say "Let Bosses Pay for Three Weeks' Leave"', *Courier-Mail* 9 April 1957.

'The Case Against the [Nexus] Referendum', *News Weekly* 15 December 1965.

'Catholics in Australian Politics', *Current Affairs Bulletin* vol 27 no 9, March 1961.

Cavanagh, Barney. 'Envoy Vince Watches What He Says', *Courier-Mail* 12 May 1975.

'C'est Le Gair: For the Old Battler of the DLP It's Time', *Age* 5 September 1973.

Clark, Colin 'The Bureau of Industry in Queensland', Royal Australian Institute of Public Administration, Queensland Division Seminar: Queensland's Administrative History, 26 October 1985.

Clark, Colin. 'Catholics and Communists in Australia: I. The Catholics in the Labor Party', *Tablet* 12 May 1956.

Clark, Colin. 'Catholics and Communists in Australia: II. The Communists and Dr Evatt', *Tablet* 19 May 1956.

Clark, Colin. 'Catholics and Communists in Australia: III. The Next Step for Catholics', *Tablet* 26 May 1956.

Clark, Colin 'Has Australia Got Water on the Brain?', *New Commonwealth* (London) 18 March 1954.

Clarke, F G 'Towards a Reassessment of Dr Evatt's Role in the 1954-55 ALP Split', *Labour History* no 19 November 1970.

Clarke, F G 'Labour and the Catholic Social Studies Movement', *Labour History* no 20 May 1971.

Coleman, Peter. 'The Santamaria Story: An Australian Disraeli?', *Bulletin* 15 February 1964.

Colwill, Robyn. 'Unemployment in Queensland During the Depression, 1929-1939', *Queensland Historical Review* vol 6 no 1 1977.

Connors, Jane. 'The 1954 Royal Tour of Australia', *Australian Historical Studies* no 100 April 1993.

'The Constitutional Issues at Stake in Queensland', *News Weekly* 19 June 1957.

Cook, George. 'Present Political Situation in Queensland', *State service* June 1957.

Costar, Brian. 'Christianity in Crisis: Queensland Churches During the Great Depression', *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland* vol 13 no 6, May 1988.

Costar, Brian. 'Controlling the Victims: the Authorities and the Unemployed in Queensland During the Great Depression', *Labour History*, no 56, May 1989.

Costar, Brian 'Denis Murphy: Labor Activist, Labor Historian', *Australian journal of politics and history*, v 34 no 1, 1988.

Costar, Brian. 'The Great Depression – Was Queensland Different?' *Labour History* no 26, May 1974.

Costar, Brian and Paul Strangio 'B A Santamaria: "A True Believer"?' *History Australia* vol 1 no 2, 2004.

'Course and Purpose of Mr B A Santamaria', *Australian Financial Review* 21 July 1960.

Cowper, Norman. 'The Menace of Communism', *Australian Quarterly* June 1948. 'The Crisis in School Building' [editorial]. *Queensland Teacher's Journal* March 1955.

[Cribb, Margaret N B]. 'Politics at State Level – Queensland', *Current Affairs Bulletin* 12 February 1968.

Crisp, K. 'The DLP – An "Ethnic Party"?' *Recorder* June 1985.

Crisp, L F. 'The DLP Vote 1958-1969 and After', *Politics* vol 5 no 1 May 1970.

Crisp, L F. 'A Rejoinder [to Senator Gair]' *Politics* vol 5 no 1 May 1970.

Crofts, E C. 'Bukowski's the "Tough Guy" in Election' *Herald* (Melbourne) 30 July 1957.

'Dangerous Brand of Anti-Communism' [Catholic Action], *Voice* October-November 1954.

Davies, A F. 'Criteria for the Political Life History', *Historical Studies of Australia and New Zealand* October 1967.

'The Decisive DLP', *News Weekly* 29 October 1969.

Deery, Phillip. 'Memories of the Movement: John Cotter, Catholic Action and the Early Cold War', *Hummer* vol 3 no 3, 1999.

Deery, Phillip. 'Permeation or Paranoia? Dr Evatt's Exposure of 'The Movement', 1954', *Victorian Historical Journal* vol 73 no 1, April 2002.

Deery, Phillip. 'Santamaria, the Movement and the Labor Split of 1954-55: A Re-examination', *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society* vol 22, 2001.

'Democratic Labor's Year of Decision', *News Weekly* 14 January 1970.

Dixon, R. 'Catholics and the Labour Party', *Communist Review* November 1948.

Dixon, R. 'Labor Fights the Industrial Groups', *Communist Review* November 1954.

Dixon, R. 'Labour Party Moves to Right', *Communist Review* February 1948.

Dixon, R. 'The People Versus Monopoly', *Communist Review* April 1957.

'DLP Calls for South-east Asia Defence Pact', *News Weekly* 13 August 1969.

'DLP: Four Kings to the Ace', *News Weekly* 3 July 1968.

'DLP Leads the Fight Against the Postal Increases', *News Weekly* 17 May 1967.

'The DLP – Political Third Force', *Current Affairs Bulletin* v 44 no 8, 8 September 1969.

'DLP Preferences', *News Weekly* 30 April 1969.

'The DLP Put the Government on the Spot', *News Weekly* 25 September 1968.

'DLP-QLP Link Discussed', *News weekly* 4 July 1962.

'DLP: So Much, With So Little, So Few', *News Weekly* 16 August 1967.

'DLP: The Key To Australia's Future', *News Weekly* 15 October 1969.

'The DLP Vote', *News Weekly* 31 January 1973.

'The DLP's Case for the Senate Election', *News Weekly* 15 November 1967.

'Dougherty of the AWU', *People* 28 February 1951.

[Doyle, Brian.] . ' "Vince" Gair Had Long and Eventful Public Life Career', *Catholic Leader* 23 November 1980.

'Dr Evatt, The Labor Party and Voice', *Voice* June 1955.

Duffy, Gavan. 'The Labor Split – 50 Years On', *News Weekly* 9 April 2005.

'Duggan Dodges Document', *Standard* (Brisbane) 18 November 1959.

Duncan, Bruce. 'Santamaria, the Church and the "Movement"', *Sydney Papers*, Winter, 2001.

Duncan, Bruce 'The Enigmatic Santamaria: the task after Ross Fitzgerald's *The pope's battalions*', *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society* vol 25, 2004.

Edwards, John 'The balance of power men', *Australian Financial Review* 6 July 1972.

Edwards, John. 'Gair Gamble Could Give Labor Senate Majority', *Australian* 3 April 1974.

'Election Inquest: QLP Finished?', *Courier-Mail* 3 June 1963.

'The End of State Aid as a Political Issue', *News Weekly* 3 August 1966.

Farran, Andrew. 'The Freeth Experiment', *Australian Outlook*, vol 26 1972.

Fitzgerald, Ross. 'Censorship in Queensland, 1954-1983', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, v 30 no 1, 1984.

'Former Premier Gair Could Come Back in Queensland', *News Weekly* 2 May 1962.

'Four Square Behind Gair', *Standard* (Brisbane) 30 March 1960.

Frame, Tom. 'The Limits to Christian Political Participation', *Quadrant* January-February 2005.

Franks, Sandra. 'Nell Gair Keeps Calm ... 'In 30 Years We've Never Been Out Of the Firing Line'', *Woman's Day* 29 April 1974.

French, Maurice. 'The Making of a Queensland Politician: Jack Duggan's Life Before Parliament, 1910-1935', *Journal of Australian Studies* no 69/ *Australian Cultural History* no 20, 2001.

Fry, Thomas Penberthy. 'State Elections- Queensland', *Australian Quarterly* June 1935.

Frykberg, Ian. 'PM Not Unduly Worried at ex-DLP Envoy's Blarney', *Sydney Morning Herald* 26 December 1974.

Gair, V C. 'A Comment on Professor Crisp', *Politics* vol 5 no 1, May 1970.

Gair, V C. 'Has Colin Clark Got Water on the Brain?', *New Commonwealth* 13 May 1954.

Gair, V C. 'There's a Dearth of Manpower', *Rydges* 1 January 1948.

Gair, V C. 'This is the People's Own Fight – We Can't Lose!', *Telegraph* 25 May 1957.

Gair, V C. 'Victorian ALP 90 pc Pro-Com', *Standard* (Brisbane) 1 July 1959.

[Gair, V C] 'Australia Can Be Saved By Youth' [Gair speech to University of Queensland students] *Standard* (Brisbane) 15 July 1959.

[Gair, V C]. 'Will Fight On', [Gair speech after decimation of QLP at Queensland state election, 1960] *Standard* (Brisbane) 8 June 1960.

Gair, Vincent 'Australia is indebted to Labor Movement', *Labor News* January 1954.

'Gair and McManus Scored the Points', *News Weekly* 20 October 1965.

'Gair: Big Concern is Family Group', *Age* 13 November 1972.

'Gair Delivers QLP Policy Speech' *Standard* (Brisbane) 18 November 1961.

'Gair Calls for Firmer Leadership', *Focus* May 1972.

'Gair For the Senate: Dynamic Policies for Australia's Future', *Standard* (Brisbane) 2 November 1961.

'Gair For the Senate: Let Queensland Have a Voice at [sic] Canberra', *Standard* (Brisbane) 22 September 1961.

'Gair In South-east Asia', *News Weekly* 29 April 1970.

'Gair Indicts ALP On Unity Ticket', *News Weekly* 13 November 1963.

'Gair is 'Wiped' By ALP', *Courier-Mail* 27 June 1981.

'Gair Lies When He Says AWU Has Declined Under Branch Secretaryship of R J J Bukowski', *Worker* (Brisbane), 24 June 1957.

'Gair Makes Sincere Appeal for Labor Unity', *Standard* (Brisbane) 23 September 1959.

'Gair: Never A Dunce', *Courier-Mail* 11 October 1973.

'Gair "Not Too Proud" To Return to Railways', *Courier-Mail* 7 December 1959.  
 'Gair Proposes Statutory Body to Replace PMG', *News Weekly* 21 June 1967.  
 'Gair Sees DLP Replacing ALP', *Courier-Mail* 21 April 1964.  
 'Gair Serves Notice: DLP Vote Will Be A Vote of Censure', *News Weekly* 16 October 1968.  
 'Gair Sets Out Policy: QLP Says Vote For ALP Puts In "Reds"', *Courier-Mail* 10 May 1960.  
 'Gair Travelling S E Asia', *Focus* March 1970.  
 'Gair Urges Moves Towards Peace in Vietnam', *News Weekly* 16 July 1969.  
 'Gair Vindicated', *Standard* (Brisbane) 28 October 1960.  
 'Gair Will Play Vital Role', *News Weekly* 28 January 1970.  
 Ginnane, Bill. 'What is Catholic Action?', *Melbourne University Magazine* 1955.  
 Grant, Bruce. 'New Role Needed for DLP', *Age* 31 October 1969.  
 Girling, J L S. 'Vietnam and the Domino Theory', *Australian Outlook* vol 21 no 1, 1967.  
 'Gorton in a Clash With Gair Over Plane', *Courier-Mail* 19 September 1968.  
 'The Government and New High Schools' (editorial), *Queensland Teacher's Journal* February 1956.  
 'Government Backs Down – Or Does It?', *News Weekly* 24 September 1969.  
 'Government Defence Attitudes: PM [McMahon] Responds to Gair's Warning', *Focus* December 1971.  
 'Government's Defence Report Adopts 'Self-Reliance' Theme – A Policy Long Advocated by DLP', *Focus* December 1972.  
 'The Great Betrayal – "Labor" Men as Tory Allies', *Standard* (Brisbane) 17 June 1959.  
 Grove, F T. 'Queensland and the Moore Government', *Australian Quarterly* no 13, 14 March 1932.  
 Guyatt, Joy 'The Labor Government and the Queensland Shearers' Strike of 1956', *Labour History* no 33, November 1977.  
 Hall, R. [Reviews of Paul Ormonde, *The Movement: Max Charlesworth, Church, state and conscience* and Niall Brennan, *The politics of Catholics*.] *Labour History* no 27 November 1974.  
 'Hands Off The Gair Government: A Warning to Potential Wreckers of Labor Party', *Sunday Truth* 21 August 1955.  
 Hardy, Ken. 'The Strong Man of the Anti-Red Camp' [Joe Bukowski profile], *Sunday Truth* undated clipping, but 1951 from context: cuttings file on Bukowski, John Oxley Library.  
 Hawkins, Max. 'Stop Meddling Call By Gair', *Telegraph* 20 October 1969.  
 Hayden, Bill. 'Demons and Democrats: Re-evaluating Disastrous "Splits"' [Review of Gavan Duffy's *Demons and democrats: 1950s Labor at the crossroads*], *News Weekly* 12 January 2002.  
 Hearn, Mark and Harry Knowles. 'Struggling for Recognition: Reading the Individual in Labour History', *Labour History*, no 87, November 2004.  
 Henderson, Gerard. 'Democratic Labor's Last Hurrah', *Australian Quarterly* March 1975.  
 Henderson, Gerard. 'The DLP Assessed', *Politics* vol 9 no 2, November 1974.  
 Henderson, Gerard. 'The DLP: Down But Not Out', *Politics* vol 8 no 1, May 1973. (This special issue was published as a monograph: Mayer, Henry, ed. *Labor to power: Australia's 1972 election*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, on behalf of the Australian Political Studies Association, 1973.)  
 Henry, J C. 'The Queensland Meat Strike', *Communist Review* August 1946.

Henry, J C. 'Queensland Worker's Victory [in the 1948 Railway Strike]', *Communist Review* May 1948.

Higgins, Christopher I. 'Colin Clark: An Interview.' *Economic Record* September 1989.

'His Health Spelt Labor Party's Doom: Fought Friend and Foe Alike' [Joe Bukowski obituary], *Sunday Truth* (Brisbane), 24 January 1960.

Higgins, John . 'The Duggan Drama', *Bulletin* 24 February 1962.

Hollander, Robin, 'Labour Management in the Queensland Housing Commission under a Labor Government, 1945-56', *Journal of Industrial Relations* December 1997.

Holt, Stephen. 'The Ultimate Insider [Alan Reid]', *National Library of Australia News* July 2006.

'The Hon V C Gair Broadcasts', *Queensland Teacher's Journal* March 1956.

Hughes, Alan. 'Is the DLP a Spent Force?', *Herald* (Melbourne) 8 April 1974.

Hughes, Colin A. 'Alphabetic Advantage in the House of Representatives', *Australian Quarterly* September 1970.

Hughes, Colin A. 'Party and Parliament in Queensland', *Parliamentary Affairs* v 10 1956-1957.

'In Case You Have Forgotten', [broken promises of the Gair government regarding education], *Queensland Teacher's Journal* February 1956.

'Industrial Groups', *State Service* December 1954.

*Industrial News*. 7 June, 1 July, September, October, December 1954, February 1955. This short lived, and crudely produced periodical was the publication of the ALP Industrial Groups in the Townsville area. These issues are held in the John Oxley Library.

'An Inspector of Schools [L F Diplock] Becomes Minister For Education', *Queensland Teachers's Journal* July-August 1956.

'Is a Labor Party Split Unavoidable?' *Voice* October – November 1954.

Jackman, Simon. 'Split Parties Finish Last: Preferences, Pluralities and the 1957 Queensland Election', *Australian Journal of Political Science* vol 27 1992.

'Joe Bukowski's Death at 58: State Loses Top Union Executive', *Courier-Mail* 21 January 1960.

Johnston, Ray. 'The Vincent Clair Gair Story', *Sunday Sun* 19, 26 September 1971.

Jones, Claude. 'The Queensland Elections', *Communist Review* October 1957.

[Joshua, Robert]. 'Sectarianism and the DLP', *Standard* (Brisbane) 9 September 1959.

Jost, John. 'Last Political Deal for An Old Dealer', *Age* 3 April 1974.

Juddery, Bruce. 'More Than Just a Titular Head' [profile of Vince Gair], *Canberra Times* 22 November 1972.

Jukes, Geoffrey. 'The Indian Ocean in Soviet Naval Policy', *Adelphi Papers* no 87, 1972.

Jukes, Geoffrey. 'What's At Stake in the Indian Ocean? The Facts and Myths', *National Times* 17 March 1972.

Julius, Max. 'Offensive Wins Against Repressive Queensland Laws', *Communist Review* August 1948.

Kane, J T and J P Ormonde, 'Forum: The Industrial Groups and the Labour Party', *Voice* March 1955.

Keefe, Jim, 'Gair Expelled By Party: Case Rejected By Full Executive', *Labor News* May 1957.

Kelly, James. 'Vote Weightage and Quota Gerrymanders in Queensland, 1931-1971', *Australian Quarterly* June 1971.

Kelly, Peter. 'Queensland – Labor's Key to Canberra', *Bulletin* 29 September 1962.

Kelly, Peter. 'Santamaria's Weekly', *Observer* 1 October 1960.

Kent, Maxwell. 'The End of the DLP?', *Broadside* 2 October 1969.

Killen, D J (ie James). '“Arise, Sir Vincent”, Not Enough to Soften Up V Gair', *National Times* 7-12 February 1972.

Killen, James. 'The Conscience of the Senate' [obituary of Condon Byrne], *Australian* 15 December 1993.

Kuhn, James W. 'A Note on Communists and Strikes in Australia', *Political Science Quarterly* vol 70 1955.

Kuhn, Rick. 'The Australian Left, Nationalism and the Vietnam War', *Labour History* no 72 May 1997.

Kutny, Daniel. 'Irish Ethnic Politics and the Democratic Labor Party: a Critique of Keith Crisp and Lyle Allan', *Recorder* December 1986.

'Labor and the Diggers – Lousy With Politics', *Focus* December 1971.

'Labor “Split by Communism” Says J A Ferguson', *Sydney Morning Herald* 13 October 1951.

'Labor Teacher'. 'Labor and State Education' [letter]. *Queensland Teacher's Journal* April 1953.

'Labor's Men of Destiny' [Gair and Duggan] *Telegraph* 2 May 1957.

Langdon, Frank C. 'The Catholic Anti- Communist Role Within Australian Labor', *Western Political Quarterly* vol 9 no 4, December 1956.

'Lessons of the Senate Elections', *News Weekly* 29 November 1967.

Lettice, Margaret N and Claire Skerman Clark. 'The 1963 Queensland State Election', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* November 1963.

Lunn, Jack. 'Gair Denies He Was Kicked Out', *Courier-Mail* 7 October 1973.

McCarthy, P C. 'The Christian Brothers in Queensland 1875-1988', *Proceedings of Brisbane Catholic History Society* 1990.

McCoy, Charles A. 'Australian Democratic Labor Party Support: an Analysis of Two States', *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies* November 1965.

McCoy, Charles A. 'Minority Group Political Cohesiveness: the DLP and Catholics', *Politics* vol 1 no 2, November 1966.

McGuinness, Jan. 'A Glimmer of Activity from a Faded Power [The DLP]' *Bulletin* 14 July 1987.

Mackerras, Malcolm. 'Another Second Preference Government', *Australian Quarterly* December 1969.

Mackerras, Malcolm, 'Preference Voting and the Donkey Vote', *Politics* vol 5 no 1 May 1970.

Mackerras, N R M. 'Why the DLP Exists', *Australian Quarterly* December 1958.

Mackerras, Neil. 'Supporting the Insupportable: the DLP – a Retrospect', *Politics* vol 8 no 1, May 1973. (This special issue was published as a monograph: Mayer, Henry, ed. *Labor to power: Australia's 1972 election*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, on behalf of the Australian Political Studies Association, 1973.)

McKinlay, Brian. 'The DLP's Falling Vote', *Nation* 15 November 1969.

McManus, Frank. 'DLP Deal Terms', *Dissent* Autumn, 1964.

Maddison, Angus. 'Quantifying and Interpreting World Development: Macromasurement Before and After Colin Clark', *Australian Economic History Review* vol 44 no 1, March 2004.

‘“A Man For All Seasons, A Friend For All”’ [obituary of Condon Byrne], *Catholic Leader* 12 December 1993.

Manning, Alan. ‘The Industrial Groups – Reform, Not Abolition’, *Voice* April 1955.

‘Mathematics of the Double Dissolution’, *News Weekly* 1 May 1974.

May, Glyn. ‘He’s The InVincible Thorn of Gorton: “I’m On Top of the World!” Says DLP Gair’, *Telegraph* 18 August 1969.

Mayer, Henry. ‘Catholic Action in Australia’, *Voice* December 1954.

Mayer, Henry. ‘The DLP Today: Facts and Hunches’, *Observer* 25 June 1960.

Meissner, W W. ‘Psychoanalytic Hagiography: The Case of Ignatius Loyola’, *Theological Studies* vol 52, 1991.

Miller, J D B. ‘Future Australian Security’, *Australian Outlook* vol 18 no 1, 1964.

‘Minister for Public Works Lectures The “Presumptuous” Teacher’s Union’, *Queensland Teachers’ Journal* February 1955.

Minogue, Dennis. ‘Gair: One of Six Men Who Will Influence The Election’, *Australian* 19 October 1972.

‘Mr Gair Refuses Dictation By Communist-AWU Junta: Premier Upholds Democratic Government’, *Sunday Truth* 20 November 1955.

Mol, Hans ‘Religion and Political Allegiance’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History* vol 16 no 3, 1970.

Monk, Paul. ‘The Price of Freedom – 2003’, *Quadrant* November 2003.

Morgan, Patrick. ‘Varieties of Political Catholicism’, *Quadrant* September-October 1967.

Morley, Peter. ‘Party Split Ended Term in Parliament’ [obituary of Brian Kehoe]. *Courier-Mail* 24 February 2005.

Morrison, A A ‘Militant Labour in Queensland, 1912-1927’, *Royal Australian Historical Society Journal* vol 38 no 3, 1952.

Morrison, A A ‘The Queensland Electoral System’, *Australian Quarterly* September 1956.

Mortimer, Rex. ‘Santamaria’s Nightmare: the NCC Faces the Seventies’ *Politics* vol 6 no 1, November 1971.

‘The Movement in Retrospect’, *Melbourne Partisan*, April 1965.

‘Mr Gair ...Archbishop Duhig ... and the Open Letter’, (editorial) *Queensland Teacher’s Journal* April 1953.

‘Mrs Gair Likes to Fade Out of Politics’, *Courier-Mail* 25 November 1970.

‘Mugga’, ‘The Lesson of Queensland’, *Observer* 11 June 1960.

Munter, Pamela Osborne. ‘Psychobiographical Assessment’, *Journal of Personality Assessment* vol 39 no 4, 1975.

Murphy, D J. ‘The Establishment of State Enterprises in Queensland’, *Labour History* no 14, May 1968.

Murphy, D J. ‘The Premiers of Queensland’, *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland* vol 10, no 3, 1977-78.

Murphy, D J. ‘Queensland’s Image and Australian Nationalism’, *Australian Quarterly*. June 1978.

Murphy, D J. ‘Religion, Race and Conscription in World War I’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History* vol 20 no 2, August 1974.

Murphy, Denis. ‘The Labor Split of ‘57’, *Courier-Mail* 25 February 1980.

Murray, Robert. ‘Fighting the Coalition: After 30 Years Santamaria’s Movement is Alive and Well’, *Australian Financial Review* 25 July 1972.



Murray, Robert. 'The DLP's Anti-Permissive Gamble', *Politics* vol 8 no 1, May 1973. (This special issue was published as a monograph: Mayer, Henry, ed. *Labor to power: Australia's 1972 election*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, on behalf of the Australian Political Studies Association, 1973.)

Murray, Robert. 'The Labor Split: Ten Years After', *News Weekly* 22 October 1964. (Note: these are reprints of interviews that Murray held with B A Santamaria and R W Holt, President of the Victorian Branch of the ALP. They were first published in the *Australian* on 12 and 13 October 1964 respectively.)

Murray, Robert. 'Looking Back on Evatt and the Split', *Quadrant* vol 48 no 10 October 2004.

Murray, Robert. 'News Weekly's march', *Dissent* Summer 1966.

Murray, Robert. 'One minute to midnight', *Dissent* 14 Winter 1965.

'Nation Already Over-Governed, Says Senator [Gair]', *Canberra Times* 29 January 1966.

'No Present From Santa Next Year? The DLP and the Liberals', *Bulletin* 11 December 1971.

'"No Prospect" of Union of Two Breakaway Labor Movements [according to B A Santamaria]', *Courier-Mail* 22 August 1960.

'Now It's Up To The DLP', *News Weekly* 19 August 1965.

O'Brien, Denis. 'Suddenly It's 1972' [profile of Gair at the end of his political career], *Bulletin* 25 November 1972.

O'Farrell, Patrick. 'The Australian Labor Split', *Landfall* no 12 2 June 1958.

O'Leary, Tony. 'Will Not Defend Policies: Gair', *Canberra Times* 3 April 1974.

Olive, Doug. 'Queensland Unionists Up in Arms', *Communist Review* March 1947.

'An Open Letter to the Premier of Queensland Concerning the Disgraceful Conditions in the State Schools of Queensland', *Queensland Teacher's Journal* March 1953.

Ormonde, J P. 'Will Industrial Groups Split the Labor Machine?' *Voice* February 1953.

Ormonde, Paul. 'How Evatt Scuppered Santamaria's Religious Vision', *Overland* no 142, 1996.

Ormonde, Paul. 'The DLP: Death in the Thaw', *Meanjin Quarterly*, Winter 1974.

'The Policy of Catholic Action: "The Movement of Ideas in Australia"', *Voice* October-November 1954.

'Politics at State Level- Queensland', *Current Affairs Bulletin* 12 February 1968.

Max Poulter, 'The 1959 Queensland electoral redistribution', *APSA News* vol 4 no 4, December, 1959.

Poulter, Max. 'The Shearing Dispute', *Voice* April 1956.

Power, Bill. 'For Labor – Unity At All Costs!', *Sunday Truth* 23 April 1961.

Power, Bill. 'Power States Facts on Labor Defeat in 1957', *Standard* (Brisbane) 17 February 1960.

Pringle, John Douglas. 'The Split and Mr Petrov', *Quadrant* February 1971.

'QLP Can Govern', *Standard* (Brisbane) 11 May 1960.

'QLP Real Labor Party Says Gair', unidentified newspaper clipping, but probably *Chronicle* (Maryborough, Q), 1961. Gair Papers, Series 12 Press Cuttings Box 12 Folder 90, National Library of Australia.

'QLP Deputy Leader Says "No Sectarian Party"' *News Weekly* 22 May 1963.

'QLP-DLP Policy', *Standard* (Brisbane) 18 November 1961.

'The QLP Has the Men, the Policy, the Principle to Govern', *Standard* (Brisbane) 30 May 1963.

'QLP Links With DLP', *News Weekly* 7 November 1962.

‘QLP Must Govern’, *Standard* (Brisbane) 25 May 1960.

‘QLP Must Govern’, *Standard* (Brisbane) March 1963.

‘QLP Objectives Based on Family’, *Standard* (Brisbane) 25 July 1963.

‘QLP Policy is Best’, *Standard* (Brisbane) 11 May 1960.

‘QLP Real Labor Party, Says Gair’, *Standard* (Brisbane) 22 September 1961.

‘QLP Vote Improved in Queensland Election’, *News Weekly* 5 June 1963.

Ramsey, Alan. ‘The Good Things in Senator Gair’s Life’, *Australian* 20 May 1968.

Rawson, Don ‘The ALP Industrial Groups: An Assessment’, *Australian Quarterly* vol 26 no 4, December 1954.

Rawson, D W. ‘The Vietnam War and the Australian Party System’, *Australian Outlook*, vol 23 no 1, 1969.

Reid, Alan. ‘My Role in the Labor Split: the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Dr Evatt’s “King Hit”’ *Bulletin* 10 October 1964.

Reid, Alan. ‘Gair’s Labor of Destruction’, *Bulletin* 13 April 1974.

‘Religion and Mr Santamaria’, *Prospect* vol 4 no 1 November 1960.

‘Remarkable Comeback For a Cast-Off Labor Premier’, *Sunday Truth* 4 June 1967.

Roberts, Frank. ‘Mr Gair Just Can’t Win!’, *Telegraph* 22 May 1957.

Robinson, A. ‘Queensland 1947 State Election’, *Communist Review* June 1947.

Ross, Edgar. ‘R S (Bob) Ross, Socialism, the Industrial Groups and the Labor Movement’, *Communist Review* March 1955.

Peter Ryan, ‘The Whitlam Years: a retrospect’, *National Observer*, Issue 48, Autumn 2001.

Samuel, Peter. ‘Bungling Toward an Election’, *Bulletin* 13 April 1974.

Samuel, Peter. ‘The Demise of the Dogged DLP’, *Bulletin* 1 June 1974.

Samuel, Peter. ‘DLP Deserting a ‘Sinking Ship’?’ *Bulletin* 11 March 1972.

Samuel, Peter. ‘The DLP: Now a Liability?’, *Bulletin*, 9 December 1972.

Samuel, Peter. ‘Hayden’s Hopes Rest on DLP’, *Bulletin* 17 November 1973.

Samuel, Peter. ‘The Splinter that Grew Into a Tree’ [DLP overview] *Bulletin*, 14 December 1968.

Samuel, Peter. ‘The Victory of the “Others”’ *Bulletin* 28 November 1970.

Santamaria, B A ‘“The Split”: Review Article’, *Australian Quarterly* vol 43, no 2, June 1971.

Santamaria, B A ‘The Catholic Absence from Australian Politics’, *Annals Australia*, April 1985.

Santamaria, B A ‘The Irish in Australia: some reflections’, *Quadrant* vol 31 no 4, May 1987.

Santamaria, B A ‘Mannix: putting the record straight’, *Quadrant* 35 no 2 March 1991.

Santamaria, B A. ‘Struggle on Two Fronts: the DLP and the 1969 Election’, *Australian Quarterly* December 1969.

Saunders, Kay. ‘A model in these matters? State intervention in Queensland during the 1946 Meat Workers and 1948 Railway strikes’, *Royal Australian Historical Society Journal* v 76 no 2 October 1990.

Saunders, Kay. ‘“Red Baiting is an AWU Habit”: Surveillance and Prosecution of Communists in Queensland During World War II’, *Royal Australian Historical Society journal* vol 74 no 3 1988.

Scalmer, Sean. ‘The Affluent Worker or the Divided Party? Explaining the Transformation of the ALP in the 1950s’, *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol 32 no 3, November 1997.

Schneider, Russell. ‘The Wooing of Vince’, *Sunday Telegraph* 7 April 1974.

Scott, Joanne. ‘“A Place in Normal Society”: Unemployed Protest in Queensland in the 1930s’, *Labour History*, no 65, November 1993.

Scully, Frank. ‘Demons and Democrats: the Story of the Labor Split’, *News Weekly* 6 April 2002.

‘The Senate: Australia Confirms the DLP’, *News Weekly* 25 November 1970.

‘Senator Gair Is Sung A Hero’, *Courier-Mail* 12 June 1972.

‘Sharkey Admits Reds Caused Labor Split’, *News Weekly* 24 October 1962.

Sharkey, L L. ‘The Labor Party Crisis’, *Communist Review* August 1952.

Sharkey, L L. ‘True Face of the Industrial Groupers’, *Communist Review* September 1955.

Sharp, Geoff. ‘Santamaria: A Review Essay’, *Arena* August-September, 1997.

Sharp, Geoff. ‘The ‘Movement’ and the New Social Movements’, *Arena Magazine* December 1992-January 1993.

Sharp, Geoff. ‘The New Right and Catholics’, *Prospect* no 3 1960.

Sheridan, Greg. ‘Remembering Bob Santamaria’, *Sydney Papers*, Winter 2001.

‘Silent Campaigner: Vincent Gair’s Third Party Line’, *Nation* 16 April 1966.

‘Sixty-second Conference [of the Queensland Teachers’ Union] : Official Opening – Tuesday, 6<sup>th</sup> May, 1952’, *Queensland Teacher’s Journal* May 1952.

Skelton, Russell. ‘State Burial For Gair on Friday’, *Age* 12 November 1980.

*South Brisbane Opinion*. 11 May 1956, 2 August 1957. (Note: the only copies of this campaign periodical that I have been able to trace are in the Gair papers in the National Library of Australia. More issues may have existed: confusingly, the issue for 11 May 1956 is number three and the issue for 2 August 1957 is number two, but this might be because more than one edition was issued for the 1956 and 1957 campaigns. Articles within these periodicals have not been listed separately in this bibliography.)

Spigelman, James. ‘DLP Policy: Content and Subject Matter’, *Politics* vol 1 no 2, November 1966.

Stanaway, Jack. ‘The Leader Labor Loved and Hated’ [obituary of Jack Duggan], *Sunday Mail* 27 June 1993.

‘State Squeezed By Two Forces: Gair’, *Courier-Mail* 10 May 1960.

Stevenson, Brian. ‘Frank Nicklin and the Coalition Government, 1957-1968’, *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol XIII, no 11, August 1989.

‘The Story of the Leave Dispute’, *Labor News* December 1956.

Strangman, Denis. ‘The DLP and the Press’, *Politics* vol 8 no 1, May 1973. (This special issue was published as a monograph: Mayer, Henry, ed. *Labor to power: Australia’s 1972 election*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, on behalf of the Australian Political Studies Association, 1973.)

Strangman, Denis. ‘Senator Gair’s Career’ [letter] *Australian Financial Review* 28 August 1973.

Summers, H J. ‘Labor Members Must Obey: It’s the QCE Who Gives the Orders’, *Courier-Mail* 17 July 1953.

Swan, Wayne. ‘A future for Labor in Queensland’, *Labor Forum* June 1987.

Symes, Colin, Peter Meadmore and Brigid Limerick, ‘Secondary Education in Queensland: Never A Matter of Primary Concern’, *Discourse* vol 14 no 2 April 1994.

Taylor, Brian. ‘Victorian Labor: 1949-1955’, *Voice* March 1955.

‘Teacher Shortage’, *Queensland Teacher’s Journal* February 1952.

Teichmann, Max. ‘The Split: A New Consensus is Forming’, *News Weekly* 9 March 2002.

'10 Years of Bitterness: Background to [Walsh's] Attack on Duggan', *Sunday Truth* 11 September 1966.

'That "Three Weeks Leave"', *Standard* (Brisbane), 4 May 1962.

Thomas, Pete. 'Stars and Stripes Over Queensland', *Communist Review* November 1954.

'Three Weeks' Leave: What Really Took Place', *Labor News* May 1957.

Truman, Tom. 'Catholics and Politics in Australia', *Western Political Quarterly* vol 12 no 2, June 1959.

Truman, Tom. 'Fraudulent Electoral Systems in Queensland', *Australian Quarterly*, December 1959.

Truman, Tom. 'Church and State: the Teaching of the Catholic Church on Intervention in Politics', *Australian Quarterly* December 1958.

Trundle, Peter. 'A Repeat of 1957 Split Unlikely', *Courier-Mail* 4 March 1980.

Tully, Donal J. 'Gair does the lair in Dublin', *National Times* 27 September – 3 October 1976.

Vaughan, Matthew. 'Santamaria Revisited', *Observer* 1 November 1960.

Verney, Jay. 'Sensual Degrees of Separation' [Reminiscences of growing up in Rockhampton: the author's father was a Gair supporter and a 1960 Queensland Labor Party candidate], *Griffith Review* no 6, Summer 2004-2005.

"Vigilate". 'A Good Start' [on school accommodation and teacher recruitment in Queensland], *Queensland Teacher's Journal* February 1954.

'Vital New Role For Senate', *News Weekly* 1 April 1970.

'The Vital Senate', *News Weekly* 21 October 1970.

Walsh, Edward Joseph 'QCE is Labor's Guardian: "Power Never Been Abused"', *Labor News* November 1953.

Walsh, Maxmilian. 'The Maths of DLP Survival', *Australian Financial Review* 23 January 1970.

'Walsh Claims Proof Reds Plotted Labor Split', *Chronicle* (Maryborough) 13 May 1957.

Wanna, John. 'A Long Revolution: Writing the Political History of Queensland Regimes', *Politics* vol 25 no 1 May 1990.

Warhurst, John. 'Catholics, communism and the Australian party system: a study of the Menzies years', *Politics* vol 14 no 2 November 1979.

Warhurst, John. 'Who Supports the National Civic Council?' *Politics* vol 8 no 1, May 1973. (This special issue was published as a monograph: Mayer, Henry, ed. *Labor to power: Australia's 1972 election*. Sydney: Angus and Robertson, on behalf of the Australian Political Studies Association, 1973.)

Webster, Barbara. 'A "Cosy Relationship" If You Had It: Queensland Labor's Arbitration System and Union Organising Strategies in Rockhampton, 1916-1957', *Labour History* no 83 November 2002.

Webster, Barbara. ' "To Fight Against the Horrible Evil of Communism": Catholics, Community and the Movement in Rockhampton, 1943-1957', *Labour History* no 81 November 2001.

Weiner, H W. 'The Reduction of Communist Powers in the Australian Trade Unions', *Political science quarterly* vol 69 no 2 June 1954.

Wells, Fred. 'Palace Revolution Likely in DLP', *Sydney Morning Herald* 12 May 1966.

Wertheim, Peter. 'The Future of the DLP', *Prospect* no 3, 1960.

White, Doug. 'Last Rites for the DLP', *Arena* no 50 1978.

'Who'll Get the DLP Senate Seat?' *News Weekly* 12 September 1962.

Williams, John. 'The Election: The DLP: The National Interest', *News Weekly* 22 May 1974.  
Wilson, David. 'The Man From the Movement' [B A Santamaria], *Weekend Australian Magazine* 16-17 February 1979.  
' "The Worker" Admits – Queensland Labor Party is not a Catholic Party', *Standard* (Brisbane) 20 July 1960.  
'The Year of the DLP Breakthrough', *News Weekly* 3 January 1968.

## INTERNET ITEMS

(Note: in all cases where I have accessed material from the Internet that is available in hard copy, I have cited the hard copy version of the item without noting its online availability. These items, however, do not appear to have a hard copy version readily available. For the sake of completeness, 'dead' links are included.)

Corcoral, Robert. 'The Labor Split Revisited: Old Memories and New Evidence', in Patmore, Greg, John Shields and Nikola Balnave, eds. *The past is before us: the ninth National Labour History Conference, University of Sydney, 30 June – 2 July 2005*. (Accessed early 2006, but link is no longer available.)

Dodkin, Marilyn. 'Surviving the Split', *Workers online* 26 October 2001.

[http://workers.labor.net.au/117/b\\_tradeunion\\_split.html](http://workers.labor.net.au/117/b_tradeunion_split.html) Accessed 21 March 2005.

Gietzelt, Arthur. 'In Defence of Dr Herbert Vere Evatt: A Very Great Australian: The True Story Behind the Outing of "The Movement"', *Evatt Foundation. Papers* no 132, 2 February 2005. <http://evatt.labor.net.au/publications/papers/132.html>. Accessed 16 March 2005.

Gould, Bob. 'Bob Santamaria and Bob Gould: a Reminiscence of the Great Labor Split', in *Ozleft*, no date provided. <http://members.optushome.com.au/spainter/Santamaria.html> Accessed 30 December 2006.

Gould, Bob. 'Race, Nationality and Religion in Australia: The Irish Catholics, the Labour Movement and the Working Class in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries', in *Ozleft*, no date provided. <http://members.optushome.com.au/spainter/Catholics.html> Accessed 26 May 2003.

Knowles, Harry. 'Writing Labour Lives.'

<http://www.econ.usyd.edu.au/wos/workinglives/knowles.html> Accessed 30 December 2006.

Martin, Nick. 'The Labor Split of the 1950s.'

[http://www.younglaborleft.org/inform.php?task\\_view&articleID\\_26](http://www.younglaborleft.org/inform.php?task_view&articleID_26) Accessed 18 May 2004.

(Note: as of 2 January 2007, this link appeared to be dead.)

McAloon, Dan. 'A Fragile 'Fair Go'', *Catholic weekly* 25 March 2001,

[http://www.catholicweekly.com.au/01/mar/25/story\\_18.html](http://www.catholicweekly.com.au/01/mar/25/story_18.html) Accessed 19 April 2006.

Robinson, Geoffrey. 'Biography and the Project of Labour History: Marxist Anticipations and Australian Examples', *Eras: School of Historical Studies On-line Journal*, [Monash University] 2003.

[http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/eras/edition\\_5/robinsonarticle.htm](http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/eras/edition_5/robinsonarticle.htm) Accessed 9 February 2004.

Santamaria, Bartholomew Augustine. [Interview transcript from SBS television program 'Australian Biography.']

<http://www.australianbiography.gov.au/santamaria/interview.html>. Accessed 7 January 2007.

Towart, Neale. 'The Fall Out' [Labor reaction to 1954 Federal election loss] *Workers Online* no 119, 16 November 2001. [http://workers.labor.net.au/119/c\\_historicalfeature\\_petrov.html](http://workers.labor.net.au/119/c_historicalfeature_petrov.html). Accessed 8 January 2007.

Whitlam, Gough. 'Go To The Documents', Speech given at National Bi-annual Postgraduate History Conference Copland Theatre, University of Melbourne, Friday 20 July 2001. <http://www.unimelb.edu.au/ExtRels/majorations/goughwhitlam20july01.html>. Accessed 13 May 2002.

Whitlam, Gough. 'Prime Ministers Press Conference Parliament House Canberra Tuesday, 2 April 1974.' This item was available through the website of the Whitlam Institute at the University of Western Sydney. The basic website address is <http://bancroft.uws.edu.au>. Accessed 8 January 2007.

Whitlam, Gough. Speeches and Statements, University of Queensland Law Society Dinner, Hilton International, Brisbane 25 October 1997. <http://whitlam.alp.org.au/qldlaw.html> . Accessed 22 December 2004.

Williams, Paul D. 'Metapopulism: Peter Beattie and the Reinvention of Queensland Populist Discourse', paper presented at Australian Political Studies Association, 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference, [http://www.auspsa.anu.edu/proceedings/2001/Australian\\_Political\\_Papers\\_W-Z.htm](http://www.auspsa.anu.edu/proceedings/2001/Australian_Political_Papers_W-Z.htm). Accessed 4 May 2006.

## AUSTRALIAN DICTIONARY OF BIOGRAPHY ENTRIES

Bergstrom, Lynette, 'Fallon, Clarence George (Clarrie), 1890?-1950', *Australian dictionary of biography*, vol 14, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996.

Bolton, G C, 'Collins, Harold Henry, 1887-1962.' *Australian dictionary of biography*, vol 13, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1993.

Bolton, G C, 'Evatt, Herbert Vere, 1894-1965.' *Australian dictionary of biography*, vol 14, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996.

Costar, Brian J. 'Gair, Vincent Clair, 1901-1980.' *Australian dictionary of biography*, vol 14, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996.

Costar, Brian J. 'Smith, William Forgan, 1887-1953.' *Australian dictionary of biography*, vol 11, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1988.

Stevenson, Brian F. 'Nicklin, George Francis Reuben, 1895-1978'' *Australian dictionary of biography*, vol 15, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000.

Thornton, Harold. 'Bukowski, Rochus Joseph John, 1901-1960.' *Australian dictionary of biography*, vol 13, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1993.

Waterson, D B. 'Walsh, Edward Joseph, 1894-1976.' *Australian dictionary of biography*, vol 16, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002.

## DICTIONARY OF NATIONAL BIOGRAPHY ENTRIES

'Gayer, Sir John, d 1649.' *Dictionary of national biography*' London: Smith, Elder 1885-1900.

'Gayer, Sir John, d 1711.' *Dictionary of national biography*' London: Smith, Elder 1885-1900.

## PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE

- Bennett, Colin to Tom Burns, 11 August 1969. Waters Papers. Copy held by author.
- Brett, Jim to Vince Gair, 10 May 1957. Gair Papers, Series 1 Correspondence Box 1 Folder 4. National Library of Australia.
- Brett, Jim to R J J 'Joe' Bukowski, 8 May 1957. Gair Papers, Series 1 Correspondence Box 1 Folder 4. National Library of Australia.
- Bukowski, R J J 'Joe' to Jim Brett, 9 May 1957. Gair Papers, Series 1 Correspondence Box 1 Folder 4. National Library of Australia.
- Bukowski, R J J 'Joe' to MLAs for Belyando, Flinders, Barcoo, Gregory, Charters Towers and Carpentaria, 28 August 1956. Gair Papers, Series 1 Correspondence Box 1 Folder 4. National Library of Australia.
- Bukowski, R J J 'Joe' to MLAs P J R Hilton, L F Diplock, G Dufficy, A Dohring and J R Taylor. Gair Papers, Series 1 Correspondence Box 1 Folder 4. National Library of Australia.
- Carrigan, H to Vince Gair. 28 September 1956. Gair Papers, Series 1 Correspondence Box 1 Folder 4. National Library of Australia.
- Cook, George to Frank Dowling, 21 April 1960. DLP Collection, MS10389, B/2/10, Folder marked 'QLP', State Library of Victoria.
- Cook, George to Frank Dowling, 30 April 1960. DLP Collection, MS10389, B/2/10, Folder marked 'QLP', State Library of Victoria.
- Gair, Vince to James F Brett, 23 June 1953. Gair Papers, Series 1 Correspondence Box 1 Folder 2. National Library of Australia.
- Gair, Vince to Mick Brosnan, 30 May 1953. Gair Papers, Series 1 Correspondence Box 1 Folder 1. National Library of Australia.
- Gair, Vince to Jack Duggan, 10 June 1953. Gair Papers, Series 1 Correspondence Box 1 Folder 2. National Library of Australia.
- Gair, Vince to John Gorton, 9 February 1968. Gair Papers, Series 1 Correspondence Box 2 Folder 16. National Library of Australia.
- Gair, Vince to Colin McCathie, 5 November 1956. Gair Papers, Series 1 Correspondence Box 1 Folder 5. National Library of Australia.
- Gair, Vince to Jack McGinley, 27 September 1956. Gair Papers, Series 1 Correspondence Box 1 Folder 4. National Library of Australia.
- Gorton, John to Vince Gair, 19 February 1968. Gair Papers, Series 1 Correspondence Box 2 Folder 16. National Library of Australia.
- Healy, Connie. Emails to author, 9, 12 May 2006.
- Judge, R J to Harold Wright, 8 September 1960. DLP Papers, John Oxley Library. OMR 113.
- McGinley, Jack to Vince Gair, 25 September 1956. Gair Papers, Series 1 Correspondence Box 1 Folder 4. National Library of Australia.
- Talty, Michael to Author, 12 May 1984. Held by author.
- Waters, Frank to Vince Gair, 15 October 1959. Waters Papers, privately held. Photocopy held by author.

## APPENDICES

### A. Documents relating to the expulsion of Vince Gair from the Australian

#### Labor Party, April 1957.

(These three documents are reproduced in: D J Murphy, 'The 1957 Split: 'A Drop in the Ocean in Political History', in D J Murphy, R B Joyce and C A Hughes, eds, *Labor in power: the Labor party and governments in Queensland, 1915-57*, St Lucia, Q: University of Queensland Press, 1980.)

#### 1. Motion of No Confidence in Gair, passed by the QCE, 18 April 1957

'This Meeting of the full Queensland executive is of the opinion that the Leader of the State Parliamentary Labor Party no longer has the confidence of the Labor Movement in Queensland in view of the fact that he had deliberately flouted the decisions of the Labor-in-Politics-Convention, which is the highest authority in the Queensland branch of the ALP. Because of his continued and openly expressed defiance of the Convention and of the Queensland Central Executive, which is the ruling body in the Labor Party between Conventions, it is obvious that the Leader of the State Parliamentary Labor Party will not accept the rules and constitution of the party whose representatives in Parliament he is appointed to lead.

'Further, the Leader of the State Parliamentary Labor Party has deliberately broken the pledge which he and all other members of the party are required to sign, and which pledges them to uphold the policy and platform of the party.

'Further, this Executive is of the opinion that the Leader of the State Parliamentary Labor Party has acted in such a way as to bring discredit on the party, and confusion and embarrassment within the ranks of the party itself. It also calls on him to appear before a



special meeting of the Central Executive to show cause why he should not be expelled from the party.’

## **2. Document signed by cabinet ministers, 23 April 1957.**

Resolution of Cabinet: The Premier, having reported today on the meeting of the Queensland Central Executive of the Labor Party held on 18 April, and otherwise on the dispute between the Executive and the Government, Cabinet declares:

1. That it has complete confidence in the Premier and recognizes the distinction with which he has led the party, and his outstanding work as head of the Executive Government.
2. That at no time, or on any matter, has the Premier done other than execute the decisions arrived at by Cabinet in accordance with the principle of Cabinet responsibility.
3. That therefore Cabinet regards as a matter of the utmost gravity the attempt being made to impose on the Premier responsibility for decisions to which we individually and jointly subscribe, and to which we adhere. And, we, the undersigned members of Cabinet wish it known that any punitive action by way of expulsion, suspension, or otherwise, taken against the Premier will therefore be regarded as having been taken against each Minister individually.

Jack Duggan signed the document, but added with his signature ‘with the exception of the final paragraph, I agree.’

## **3. Charges against Gair at the QCE meeting on 24 April 1957**

1. Defiance of the decision of Labor-in-Politics Convention at Mackay, and on numerous occasions since – in Press statements, at meetings of the Parliamentary Labor Party Caucus, and at meetings of the Queensland Central Executive.
2. Refusal to accept decisions of the QCE interpreting Convention decisions.

3. Breach of the Pledge signed by all Members of the Party requiring them to uphold the policy and platform of the Party.
4. Discredit brought on the Party by such procedures as:
  - (a) Redcliffe Commission – designed to discredit one individual
  - (b) Lands Commission – designed to discredit an Affiliated Union but only brought discredit on the Party and the Minister
  - (c) Club legislation initiated because of representations made by one individual (invasion of rights of privacy, and the principle that a person is free to choose his own company)
  - (d) University Bill initiated at the instigation of one individual and against all accepted authorities connected with the University of Queensland and all other Universities in British companies
  - (e) Petrol Bill which contains some provisions of Fascist or Communist character, such as onus of proof on the accused and concentration of power in one man
  - (f) Consistent false leadership by encouraging members of the Parliamentary Labor Party to refuse to accept decisions of the Labor-in-Politics Convention and the Queensland Central Executive
  - (g) Soliciting and obtaining financial support from non-Labor sources and sources definitely unsympathetic to Labor and the rank and file interests of the Labor Party, without accounting to any individuals or any body such as the QCE
5. Repudiating a personal Pledge given to a number of delegates at Convention and inferring that any report given by these delegates was untrue.
6. Organising and arranging the issue of a statement by Cabinet which is a direct challenge to the Queensland Central Executive and undoubtedly political blackmail of the most vicious type, by stating, in effect, that if the Leader could not run the party his way (without reference to the rank and file or its representatives) he would abandon the party and form or join another party opposed to Labor.

Note: Important Rules covering this matter are Rule 32 (r) which obliges the QCE to guard the interests of the Party generally, and rule 32 (a) empowering the Executive to suspend or expel any member violating its Rules and Platform, and Rule 32 (v)

empowering the QCE to interpret its own Rules and decisions of Convention, and to expel any member who refuses to abide by its interpretation or decision.

#### **4. The motion to expel Gair, 24 April 1957**

This Executive, after hearing Mr Gair state his case in showing cause why he should not be expelled from the Australian Labor Party, decides that he has not refuted the charge that he has defied Conventional decision on the matter of three weeks' leave, and that he has not shown that he has not repudiated his personal pledge in the matter of three weeks' leave, given to a number of delegates. This Executive is satisfied that there was a pledge given to the Convention delegates and that Mr Gair has since repudiated that pledge.

This Executive declares that the Premier's reply as to why he has not carried out a Labor-in-Politics Convention decision in connection with three weeks' leave is entirely unsatisfactory. His continued refusal to accept ALP rules and platform render him unfit to be a member of the Labor Party.

This Executive emphasizes that it regrets very much the necessity which forces it to adopt this decision. Every possible means has been examined with a view to obviating the regrettable deterioration in the relationship between the State Parliamentary Labor Party and the Executive Body. Nevertheless the Executive has an undeniable obligation to see that the rights of the industrial unions and the rank and file of the Labor Party must be preserved and protected and that the Convention decisions must be observed. The Mackay Convention, after prolonged discussion and after extended negotiations following on the discussions at the Rockhampton Convention, arrived at a definite decision that legislation for three weeks' leave should be implemented. Mr Gair must accept responsibility for his leading role in this organised defiance of the recognized authority in the Party, with particular reference to the three weeks' leave question, and this Executive must accept its obligation also, as distasteful and regrettable as it undoubtedly is. We therefore decide that the membership of Mr Gair be

terminated forthwith; that is, that he be expelled from the party and that the Parliamentary Labor Party be advised accordingly, and that the Executive Committee request the Parliamentary Labor Party to meet them to hear views and reasons of the QCE for arriving at this decision on Monday next at 2.30 pm.

## **B. Gair Celebrated in Song**

1.

This tribute song is to the tune of ‘My Hero’ from *The chocolate soldier*, a 1908 operetta by Oscar Straus based on George Bernard Shaw’s 1894 play *Arms and the man*. The play satirises false notions of war and love. More than 250 of Gair’s friends and supporters, including Senator Jack Kane, sang it to him in the Anglican Church hall, New Farm, Brisbane, on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of his election to the Queensland parliament on the night of 11 June 1972. The song was reproduced in the *Courier Mail* the next day.

You are a true and noble leader, we as Australians owe you much,  
Your loyal and honest upright guidance inspires us all to do our best.  
We pledge our trust to one another and on that you can rely,  
With lives devoted to our country,  
We celebrate this time with you, Oh, happy anniversary too.  
Come, come, we all salute you, we know your worth,  
Come, come your noble actions resound [around?] the hearth.  
Come, come, naught can destroy you.  
Hearts linked unbending, we’re working for you, Senator Gair,  
Come, come God bless and guide you,  
This is our prayer.

2.

**Advance Australia Gair**

Australia's sons and daughters too,  
Come rally to the fray,  
Come join our leader tried and true,  
Come join and win the day.  
A guardian of our liberty,  
A force beyond compare,  
In every age at every stage,  
Advance Australia Gair.  
Then sing with me to victory,  
Advance Australia Gair.

We're bold and faithful, strong and free,  
Beneath our Southern Sky,  
We'll never fear our enemy,  
But hold our banner high.  
In faith and solidarity,  
We'll never know despair.  
In every age at every stage,  
Advance Australia Gair.  
Then sing with me to victory,  
Advance Australia Gair.

(Source: Democratic Labor Party Papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland.  
OME 113, Box 12.)