

7. The Pizzey–Chalk interlude, 1968

With the retirement of Frank Nicklin as Premier in January 1968, the Queensland Parliament entered a period of turbulence and uncertainty. Nicklin had been the leader of the Country Party continuously since June 1941, accumulating a total of 26.5 years at the helm. He had been Premier for 10.5 years and had governed the state competently and conscientiously. He had stamped his own personal integrity and probity on the character of the government and had quietly maintained a guiding hand over the cabinet and party room. In the Parliament, he was uniformly held in high regard not only by his own Country Party colleagues but by his Coalition partners and members of the opposition. He had maintained a sense of decency in the Assembly that was recognised by friend and foe alike. At the time of his retirement, Nicklin had attained many parliamentary achievements, not the least of which was the general acceptance of the Coalition parties as the natural parties of government. He had also, perhaps more conscientiously, sustained the Country Party as the dominant party in the Coalition despite consistently polling fewer votes than the largely urban-based Liberal Party.

Nicklin's retirement at seventy-two years of age was not exactly a surprise; it had been expected for some time. His health and energy were waning and he had spent some weeks in hospital during the final months of his record-breaking premiership. It was widely believed that Nicklin had hung on to the job for so long simply to beat the previous record of Labor's Forgan Smith as the longest-serving premier (Forgan Smith had served 10 years and three months). Nicklin resigned after he had beaten Smith by two months. His Country Party colleagues were preparing for a smooth leadership transition, without the rancour or negative publicity associated with a divisive leadership tussle. There was still some anxiety in the party about its chances of winning the next election (due by May/June 1969)—at maximum, only 16 months away. Hence, party opinion leaders intended that the required change in leadership ought to proceed as smoothly as possible and be virtually undetected. The new leader, they felt, should step quietly into Nicklin's shoes, carry on in his avuncular style and consolidate the government's record in office.

Well before Nicklin officially retired, it was widely expected that the Education Minister, Jack Pizzey—who had been the loyal deputy in the party for more than 10 years and was sixteen years Nicklin's junior—would inherit the mantle of premier. As deputy leader, Pizzey was generally considered the one and only successor who enjoyed unrivalled status and seniority. By 1967, Pizzey was the only other Country Party minister besides Nicklin to have served in

each ministry since the change of government in 1957. Not only was he next in line among the Country Party ministers, he had the important advantage of receiving Nicklin's blessing as his successor. By 1968, it was seen as 'inevitable' that Pizzey would become the successor as Premier (Lunn 1984:27). His term in office seemed secured for the long term.

Yet, politics is laced with strange occurrences. Despite the best-laid plans to guarantee a smooth transition, events were to dash these hopes. Fate intervened, leaving the state in some uncertainty and the Country Party in a state of shock. Although Pizzey was just turning fifty-six at the time of his elevation to the Premiership, he had suffered previous health problems, including a heart attack in 1962 while a minister in the second Nicklin government. Within seven months of becoming Premier, Pizzey collapsed and died suddenly on 31 July 1968—only the third Queensland Premier to die while in office (the other two were T. J. Byrnes in 1898 and Ned Hanlon in 1952). There had been little warning to those who worked closely with him or knew him well. His death was a blow to Queensland, which was already recovering from the shock of the tragic death of Prime Minister, Harold Holt, in 1967. Pizzey was replaced in the short-term by Gordon Chalk, the Liberal Treasurer, who became the new Premier, not merely Acting Premier.

Pizzey's unexpected departure from the political scene occurred before a logical successor could be groomed within the Country Party. With the issue of succession thrown open by this unfortunate turn of events, new opportunities opened up and other possibilities within the Coalition became conceivable. In early August, it was no secret that the senior ranks of the Country Party were divided over the next generation of leadership and in particular over who possessed the necessary skills and style to lead the party through a difficult period ahead. It was not inconceivable that the Country Party would be unable to agree on a successor and perhaps risk losing the top job to the Liberals. Among the Country Party ministers no obvious candidate stood out from the pack and no-one enjoyed across-the-board support. While seniority and standing were usually taken as important criteria in selecting successors, three or four of the remaining six Country Party ministers each felt they were the legitimate heirs and seemed intent on standing for the leadership. Aspirations were fanned and for the first time in decades contenders were campaigning on grounds other than the principle that they were simply 'next in line' or anointed.

Outside the party confines, there was also some discussion of the wider merits of the Coalition ministry. It was suggested in the press only a couple of days after Pizzey's death (*Courier-Mail*, 2 August 1968) that the next most senior minister in the Coalition, the Liberal leader, Gordon Chalk, should stake a claim on the Premiership. Indeed, many Liberals felt it was their turn to lead the Coalition and that they had been the junior partner for long enough. In their opinion,

Chalk was the most qualified and able minister to lead the Coalition (a view not disputed at the time by many Country Party members). Conceivably, a strong push from the Liberals could have seen it attempt to wrest the Premiership and resist further nominations coming from the Country Party. On the other hand, if the Country Party was to insist it retain the Premiership as the larger Coalition partner, it first had to agree on a nominated candidate and be unanimous in its support. In the first week of August 1968, it was not clear whether a single candidate could gain sufficient support from within the parliamentary party to claim the top job.

Thus, 1968 became perhaps one of the more turbulent years in Queensland politics; certainly it heralded one of the more unpredictable periods during the long reign of the conservative parties from 1957 to 1989. The year began with the long-awaited and graceful exit of Frank Nicklin, followed by the untimely death of Jack Pizzey. In the hiatus created by Pizzey's departure, Chalk seized the helm and remained Liberal Premier for eight days,¹ before the Country Party, anxious to regain the top job, replaced him with its nominee, Joh Bjelke-Petersen. For a state that traditionally changed premiers very infrequently, 1968 saw four in the job in short succession.

Premier Jack Pizzey: ending years of waiting

Jack Charles Allan Pizzey was born in Childers in 1911. An active cricketer and sportsman, he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Queensland in 1942 and secured a Diploma of Education while in his first term as a parliamentarian. He began his career as a student teacher at the age of fifteen at Bundaberg State School, and subsequently taught in many schools across the state. During World War II, he enlisted in the forces, serving as an artillery officer and attaining the rank of captain before his discharge in 1945. After the war, he worked as an organiser for the Board of Adult Education but resigned in 1949 to become the manager of the Cane Growers' Cooperative in Childers. He subsequently became active in sugarfarming politics and rural producer bodies.

Pizzey entered the Parliament in 1950 as the Member for Isis, a country seat based on Wide Bay. He had spent much of his earlier life in towns and cities and was one of the very few with tertiary qualifications among the Country Party parliamentarians. After winning his seat, he resided with his family in Taringa, one of Brisbane's more prestigious inner western suburbs. In the Parliament, Pizzey—who was 'often referred to by his initials, J. C. A.'—impressed some observers as a 'fluent and forceful speaker' but on other occasions could become

¹ He was 'King for a week' (Hazlehurst 1987:213).

rattled in debates (*Courier-Mail*, 8 January 1967). Nicklin recognised Pizzey's experience and talents and, on winning government in August 1957, appointed him Education Minister—a position he held continuously until he was elevated to Premier in January 1968. With a professional background in education, Pizzey was a particularly interested and active minister who presided over an era of enormous expansion in the state school system. He was also a hard-working and competent minister who very quickly became one of the more politically astute ministers in the cabinet.

As Nicklin's protégé, Pizzey served the Premier by maintaining a personal loyalty that was rock-solid. Nicklin had given Pizzey his initial break and shown faith in him as a minister; Pizzey felt that in return this deserved his unfailing support and confidence. Gradually, Pizzey became Nicklin's trusted confidant in cabinet. He had good political instincts and provided a good ear and cool head when the Premier sought political and administrative advice. According to a contemporary ministerial colleague, who was perhaps a little envious: 'Pizzey had always been Frank's right-hand man. They worked so closely together that they almost seemed like twins...the two of them always seemed to have their heads together' (Bjelke-Petersen 1990:82). Both men came to symbolise the Coalition government in the 1960s: capable, dour, industrious and reliable. At times, the government resembled a two or three-man band led by Nicklin and Pizzey with Chalk becoming increasingly important from the Liberal side.

Press reports at the time of Pizzey's elevation to the Premiership spoke of his patience and dedication. They described him as the man 'waiting in the wings' who had developed a close personal friendship with the Premier, including a shared passion for cricket and a keen interest in the Returned Services League (RSL). Logan Sligo, a political reporter with the *Courier-Mail* (8 January 1968), acknowledged Pizzey's many qualities, while highlighting his preparedness to wait his turn as the 'loyal lieutenant':

Waiting is not a new experience for the 56 year old ex-school teacher from the rich sugar lands of Childers. His strength is that he has always put his periods of waiting to good advantage. While he waited for the war to end to resume his career as a teacher—he served as a captain in the Fifth Field Artillery Regiment—he continued his studies...Always a keen and above average cricketer, Mr Pizzey a left-hand bogey bowler practiced and waited and won selection for Queensland for the last [Sheffield Shield] match of the season against Victoria in 1932. In his ten years as deputy leader of the Country Party, and understudy to Mr Nicklin, he has been breaking records as the State's longest-serving Education Minister.

The press made much of Pizzey being an educated Premier, with constant references to his status as an ex-schoolteacher (implicitly contrasting him with his various predecessors: Frank Nicklin, a smallholding farmer who followed three railwaymen—Vince Gair, Ned Hanlon and Frank Cooper—and before that a house painter, Forgan Smith). His considerable experience in the ministry combined with a stint of more recent overseas travel were regarded by his colleagues as having ‘broadened’ his outlook, ‘restored’ his health and ‘completed his grooming for the Premiership’ (*Courier-Mail*, 8 January 1967). Press comment also suggested, however, that the new Premier’s ‘most difficult task will be to steer the Coalition ship through troubled waters’—a reference to deteriorating relations between the Coalition partners as their years in government wore on (*Courier-Mail*, 8 January 1968). It was also recorded that Pizzey had developed a good personal working relationship with the Liberal leader and Treasurer, Gordon Chalk (the only other remaining member of the first Country–Liberal ministry formed in 1957). In many ways, therefore, Pizzey received a dream run from his party and in the press on his ascendancy to the Premiership.

A tough contest for the deputy’s position serving under Pizzey

Although Pizzey was unchallenged for the leadership, the Country Party was far from being of one mind about who should be promoted into the deputy leader’s position. The fight over this position was intense because the incumbent deputy would ostensibly become the future leader of the party once Pizzey retired. So, much was at stake. Yet, if the appearance of a smooth and harmonious transition was intended, the power struggle over the vacant deputy position gave short shrift to the intent.

The main contenders to replace Pizzey as the new deputy leader were all from the previous ministry. The most senior contender in cabinet rank and experience was the Lands Minister, Alan Fletcher (first elected to the Assembly in 1953). The second-most senior was the Works Minister, Joh Bjelke-Petersen, who entered the Parliament in 1947 but for his first 16 years had remained on the backbench. The third candidate, Ron Camm, was a comparatively junior minister. He had entered the Parliament through a by-election in 1961 and was the most recent addition to the ministry from the Country Party. Camm had become the Minister for Mines and Main Roads only in March 1965.

In the last Nicklin ministry (1966–68), Fletcher was the third Country Party minister in cabinet rank behind Nicklin and Pizzey. At sixty years of age, he was considered the elder statesman and a likely successor for the deputy’s position

despite limited breadth of ministerial experience (having singularly been the Minister for Land Administration since June 1960 after a term as Speaker). By 1968, however, he was not unanimously supported by his colleagues and was regarded as ‘unpopular’ in some quarters (Hughes 1980:27). Some felt a younger candidate was preferable. There was even some speculation before the ballot about whether Fletcher would agree to stand as a candidate.

Johannes Bjelke-Petersen was only the sixth-ranked Country Party minister in the final Nicklin government with not yet five years’ ministerial experience and all in Works and Housing. Bjelke-Petersen was ranked behind not only Fletcher but also two other ministers: Harold Richter (Local Government) and John Row (Primary Industries). Bjelke-Petersen, who was about to turn fifty-seven years of age, felt slighted by Nicklin and overlooked when new ministers had been appointed at the Premier’s discretion.² A hard party worker, Bjelke-Petersen felt he deserved to be higher in the pecking order as a result of his longer seniority in the Parliament and the assistance he had given to other party colleagues over the years. In truth, however, Bjelke-Petersen was second-last among the Country Party ministry, with only Camm (aged fifty-three) lower on the ministerial list. Despite Camm being ranked seventh and having the least amount of experience as a minister, he was nevertheless taken seriously as a contender.

The relative experience of the three contenders is shown in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 Seniority of the candidates for the Country Party deputy leadership position in January 1968

Candidates for the deputy’s position in the Country Party: January 1968	Years/months the candidate had been in State Parliament	Years/months the candidate had been in the ministry	Highest cabinet rank in the Coalition ministry (and among CP ministers)
Alan Fletcher (Lands Minister; aged sixty years)	14 years, 10 months	7 years, 7 months (plus three years as Speaker, 1957–60)	4th (3rd)
Joh Bjelke-Petersen (Works and Housing Minister; aged fifty-seven years)	20 years, 8 months	4 years, 4 months	7th (6th)
Ron Camm (Mines and Main Roads Minister; aged fifty-three years)	6 years, 6 months	2 years, 10 months	11th (7th)

² He was especially irked by John Row’s appointment after only three years in the Parliament (Bjelke-Petersen 1990).

The contest for the position of deputy leader also captured attention because there were some doubts over the capacity of Pizzey to lead the state for any considerable length of time. In a prophetic comment made only days before Pizzey assumed the Premiership in January, the *Courier-Mail's* chief political reporter reminded readers that 'Mr Pizzey's health while not of great concern must be considered. He has had one heart attack and the possibility of his deputy taking over cannot be overlooked' (*Courier-Mail*, 5 January 1968).

As the jockeying for position began in the new year, the *Courier-Mail* (5 January 1968) described Camm as the 'hot favourite' to win party support for the deputy's job, probably ahead of Bjelke-Petersen. The paper speculated that Camm was considered by many in the party as having been groomed for the job. They reported a government member as saying 'Mr Camm is the one to watch. He is likely to become Deputy Country party Leader and could be earmarked for eventual Premiership'. Closer to the ballot, the paper acknowledged that Bjelke-Petersen was 'favoured to lead in the first ballot' with about 11 or 12 mainly backbench votes from the 27 party members (*Courier-Mail*, 9 January 1968). Although the candidature of Camm and Fletcher would split the vote against Bjelke-Petersen, a tight 'exchange of votes between supporters of Mr Camm and Mr Fletcher could see either of the two elected as the new deputy leader. But any leakage of votes to Mr Bjelke-Petersen from whoever is eliminated first... could see Mr Bjelke-Petersen elected' (*Courier-Mail*, 9 January 1968).

In the event, Bjelke-Petersen achieved an absolute majority in the first ballot for the deputy leadership. Camm and Fletcher polled poorly. By defeating Fletcher, Bjelke-Petersen had effectively overtaken the more senior minister and beaten off a 'young turk' challenge from Camm. He was then well placed to assume the leadership of the party whenever it should become vacant. Press reports—with the benefit of hindsight—belatedly acknowledged that Bjelke-Petersen was 'highly regarded by Country backbenchers' (*Courier-Mail*, 11 January 1968). Reports described the new deputy as 'quietly spoken', a family man with four children and a 'non-drinker' who bulldozed the brigalow scrub, held a flying licence and pioneered aerial seeding. The main reasons for Bjelke-Petersen's victory in 1968, however, are generally considered to be his closeness to the backbench and their feelings of obligation. Hughes (1980:27) has argued that Bjelke-Petersen's ascendancy was attributed to 'Fletcher's unpopularity and to his own favours to members as Minister for Works in the form of electoral district projects and services to the party generally as a keen campaigner'. His election was repayment for political debts.

The contest over the deputy's position was a significant clash of personalities and egos. These factors not only played a big part in the leadership struggle of early 1968, they went on to shape the party's leadership dynamics for the next two years. The feeling that the leadership had not been fully resolved in 1968

led to subsequent fallout that affected the party and, in October 1970, almost brought Bjelke-Petersen down. Camm in particular remained a major challenger in the initial years of Bjelke-Petersen's premiership.

Pizzey's new ministry: steady as she goes

In announcing the new ministry, Premier Pizzey made few changes. Stability was the hallmark of the transition. Pizzey explained that he had decided against making any sweeping changes within the ministry to either personnel or portfolios, but those required would make for smoother administration and even greater efficiency. He also indicated that under his new government he intended to employ the talents more of those outside the ministry and added that 'I intend to examine ways of making the maximum use of the many and varied talents of government back-bench members—one way to do this was the greater use of committees to examine government business' (*Courier-Mail*, 17 January 1968).

On winning support from his own party colleagues on 10 January, Pizzey received endorsement from his Coalition partners as the Premier-elect, with Chalk issuing a statement congratulating the new leader. The immediate problem was to fill a vacancy in the ministry caused by Nicklin's resignation and then reallocate portfolios. The Country Party constitution permitted a leader to either directly appoint a member to complement the ministry or conduct an election in the party room. The latter option attracted considerable interest in the party and the media—despite Nicklin having selected the previous three ministers. Pizzey was also known as a strong supporter of the party policy allowing leaders the right to select ministers. Some backbenchers, however, were anxious to test the waters with a ballot (Hughes 1980:158)—for reasons not least of which were to establish their own credentials for promotion. The former minister Alf Muller (Fassifern) and the relatively new member for South Coast, Russ Hinze (an ex-chairman of Albert Shire), challenged Pizzey to conduct a ballot for the vacancy. At the party meeting, both made representation in support of a ballot, but Nicklin, who was chairing the meeting as the outgoing leader, ruled the matter one entirely for the incoming leader.

In the weeks leading up to the party meeting, the local papers began speculating about whether Pizzey would revert to a democratic election process or maintain recent practice and simply choose a new minister. There was also speculation about who should be considered for the ministry, with many outsiders discussed as possible contenders. The list of hopefuls included Wally Rae (Gregory), Henry McKechnie (Carnarvon), Max Hodges (Gympie), Vic Sullivan (Condamine) and the government whip, Vince Jones (Callide). Some of these members even

attracted the label 'obvious candidates' or most 'likely' new appointee. Foremost among the contenders, however, was Neville Hewitt (Mackenzie), whose seat was in central Queensland. Coming from Rockhampton, Hewitt had 'strong claims' because of the perceived need to give his region representation in the ministry as well as considerable local support for promotion to cabinet (*Courier-Mail*, 5 January 1967). Hewitt also claimed that the new Premier had given him an undertaking that he was to be the next in line for promotion. There was still the expectation in those days that ambitious members simply got themselves onto the waiting list, served their turn in the queue and hoped to outlive their colleagues.

True to form, Pizzey ruled out an election for the vacancy to his cabinet and chose to nominate the additional minister personally. Against most expectations, however, he did not select Hewitt and instead promoted Vic Sullivan, who had represented the Western Downs area since 1960. Sullivan's appointment was somewhat surprising as he had been in the Parliament for five years less than Hewitt, who had served almost 12 years as a backbencher. Pizzey's decision was immediately controversial and within days it was reported that Hewitt intended to resign from all government committees from the day Pizzey officially became Premier (*Courier-Mail*, 13 January 68). In a letter to Pizzey written immediately after the party meeting, Hewitt was believed to have stated that his major grievance was that Pizzey had not kept his word. Hewitt believed that Pizzey had promised him the next vacancy on the last day of the previous session of parliament (7 December) when debating a bill on cooperative societies. After one government member (Alf Muller) had spoken against the bill and with Hewitt about to join him, Pizzey had spoken privately to the latter in order to obtain his support for the bill. When the bill was put to the vote, Muller crossed the floor to oppose it and Hewitt claimed he would have done the same but decided against such action after being led to believe he would receive Pizzey's endorsement for the ministry when the time came.

With the addition of Sullivan, the ministry was complete. Ten of the ministry remained in the same portfolios they held under Nicklin. Two Country Party ministers were required to assume new responsibilities: Pizzey as Premier and Minister for State Development, and Alan Fletcher, who was moved to Education and Cultural Activities. There had been some debate over whether the new deputy would be given the education portfolio (as it was considered the second-most senior portfolio among the Country Party's responsibilities), but Pizzey preferred to retain Bjelke-Petersen in Works and Housing while promoting the unsuccessful Fletcher to his old ministry. Sullivan was given the lands portfolio vacated by Fletcher. The short-lived Pizzey ministry, which served from 17 January to 1 August 1968, was

- Premier and Minister for State Development: Jack Pizzey, CP

- Treasurer: Gordon Chalk, Lib.
- Minister for Works and Housing and for Police: Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, CP
- Minister for Justice and Attorney-General: Dr Peter Delamothe, Lib.
- Minister for Education and Cultural Activities: Alan Fletcher, CP
- Minister for Local Government and Conservation: Harold Richter, CP
- Minister for Primary Industries: John Row, CP
- Minister for Health: Doug Tooth, Lib.
- Minister for Labour and Tourism: John Herbert, Lib.
- Minister for Mines, Main Roads and Electricity: Ronald Camm, CP
- Minister for Transport: William Knox, Lib.
- Minister for Industrial Development: Frederick Campbell, Lib.
- Minister for Lands: Victor Sullivan, CP

For the first time, separate ministerial responsibility for police was acknowledged and allocated to Bjelke-Petersen, who initially combined it with Works and Housing. A few months later, on becoming Premier, he insisted on keeping the police within his portfolio until after the May 1969 election. During this time, Bjelke-Petersen first became associated with police matters and with senior officers. Towards the end of his Premiership, however, Bjelke-Petersen's close association with senior officers and support of the police generally were seen to have begun with his initial period as minister.

Public discontent in the Coalition: the contest over the Landsborough by-election

After Nicklin's resignation from the Parliament, a by-election was called for his seat of Landsborough on the Sunshine Coast, to be held on Saturday 16 March. Formed by the electoral redistribution of 1949, the seat of Landsborough had been held continuously by the Premier and was regarded as a 'tied' Country Party seat. It was so safe that in 1957 it had remained uncontested by all other parties and independents (in other words, when the writ was issued only Nicklin's nomination was received). When he was contested, Nicklin had regularly polled more than 70 per cent of the primary vote. During the by-election, it was claimed that one in 10 registered voters was a member of the Country Party, hence, without doubt this was a most difficult seat to prise away from the Country Party. Winning was not, however, necessarily the prime motivation. With the Liberals' decision to contest the by-election, some were intent simply to show they had the courage to stand against their Coalition partners, especially in the increasingly suburban electorates on the outskirts of Brisbane.

The announcement of the by-election in January 1968 initiated a major brawl among the Coalition partners and especially within the Liberals over whether to stand an official candidate against the Country Party candidate. The Liberal Party had increasingly become concerned in the 1960s about its restricted electoral territory, which was limited more by agreement with the Country Party than simply lack of votes. Dissidents within the Liberal executive had begun openly canvassing the notion of standing Liberals in Country Party seats. At this stage, the Country Party had not preselected its candidate and eventually a field of seven would stand for the position (with the preselection ballot called for 20 February). Labor contested the seat by renominating F. Freemantle, who was unsuccessful against Nicklin in 1966.

On 16 January 1968, the Liberal state executive met to discuss the issue of standing an endorsed candidate in Landsborough. The issue, however, split the party internally. The parliamentary leader, Gordon Chalk, was vehemently against standing an endorsed Liberal against the Coalition partner, but he was opposed by the party's president, Dr A. W. Hartwig, who then headed the 'ultra-liberals'. Given that the Liberals had just committed themselves to the principle of challenging 'vacant' Country Party seats (that is, where no sitting member was re-standing), the party executive's decision not to contest the Landsborough by-election seemed timid and inconsistent. The *Courier-Mail's* political reporter described the resolution as a 'surprise decision'. The party president, however, pointed out that it was a majority decision but not a unanimous one. Hartwig was clearly disappointed and admitted the decision was 'against his expressed desire'. Coalitionists within the party regarded the decision as 'a victory for the Parliamentary Leader' (Chalk) and for his deputy, the Justice Minister, Peter Delamothe (*Courier-Mail*, 17 January 1968). Chalk was not only an ardent coalitionist, he had personal reasons for discouraging three-cornered contests as his own seat of Lockyer was regarded by the Country Party as one of theirs. Hartwig would say shortly after that he would prefer Charles Porter to lead the Liberal Party instead of Chalk (*AJPH* 1968:vol. 14, no. 3, p. 429).

Initially, the media greeted the Liberal Party executive's decision as a victory for commonsense. The day after the decision not to contest the former Premier's seat of Landsborough, the *Courier-Mail* (18 March 1968) stated:

[R]elations within the Cabinet, and within the Coalition, have begun on a sound note, for the Liberal party's decision not to contest Landsborough, when it is vacated by Mr Nicklin, should help it to gain the goodwill of its partner party. In all the circumstances the Liberal decision was a sound one. The Liberal party did not have the organisation to campaign and win this seat, and to have a three-corner contest just for the sake of maintaining the principle of the right to contest vacated government electorates would have been unwise.

The editorial continued, however:

At some stage in the life of the Pizzey Ministry there will be Liberal pressures for an electoral deal which will give the Liberals, as the popular non-Labor party in this State, a greater say in the State's management. These pressures may prove irresistible. But in politics, as in anything, too much haste may make for less speed.

Such comments were remarkably prescient—except that the pressures erupted sooner than anyone predicted. Discontent over the executive's motion spurred some local branch members of the party in the Landsborough area to attempt to reverse the decision not to field a candidate. In the first instance, this caused the party's executive to meet again to reconsider its earlier view. The *Courier-Mail*, which was by now running the story as evidence of a major rift in the Coalition, reported that the heated second executive meeting lasted more than four hours and did not break up until 12.05 am. The paper recounted:

[A]fter a long and bitter debate, the Liberal party State executive early today announced that it had reaffirmed its decision not to contest the by-election...The statement disguised a debate which one delegate described as the most bitter he could remember...Some Liberals have felt that this decision was leaning over too far to the Country party and the Parliamentary 'ginger group' has openly urged a re-appraisal by the State executive. (*Courier-Mail*, 3 February 1968)

Another delegate at the meeting was quoted as saying 'the gap between the radical and conservative wings of the party had only temporarily closed, and that sooner or later there would have to be a showdown' (*Courier-Mail*, 3 February 1968). The ultra-Liberals expressed disappointment at the role their leader, Gordon Chalk, played in the decision.

Within days, however, Landsborough Liberals decided to defy the state executive and stand a local Liberal candidate (Peter Nelson-Gracie, a resident of Caloundra). Their action was in direct defiance of the executive, yet it gained the qualified support of the President, Dr Hartwig. Once a local candidate was selected, Hartwig volunteered that he would support Nelson-Gracie 'in a private capacity' but not as party president. Chalk distanced himself from the renegade candidate, claiming he 'would not take part in any campaign for a Liberal candidate in Landsborough'. Chalk publicly accused Hartwig of 'creating dissension' in both the Liberal Party and the Coalition 'by persisting in his support of the Liberal candidate'. Chalk stated he would assist the government win the seat by giving his personal support to the Country Party's candidate, Michael Ahern (the twenty-five-year-old son of the party's former

state president, John Ahern). With obvious irritation, Chalk warned the dissident Liberals that he was ‘determined they will not be allowed to wreck the government’ (*Courier-Mail*, 19 February 1968).

Chalk, however, found it increasingly difficult to impose his authority on the party and other senior Liberals began to break ranks and support the ‘rebellion’ against the party executive’s decision. The former Liberal leader and Deputy Premier, Sir Ken Morris, spoke out in favour of the Landsborough Liberals and, together with other sitting Liberal members associated with the ‘ginger group’—Charles Porter (Toowong), John Murray (Clayfield) and Bill Lickiss (Mount Coot-tha)—announced their support for the non-endorsed Liberal candidate. As the conflict intensified, both sides began raising the stakes as in a game of poker. The Liberal state executive suspended the party president for fanning dissension. The endorsed Country Party candidate, Mike Ahern, claimed on many occasions that he was the ‘official government candidate’ and that his Liberal challenger was an ‘independent’. He upped the ante when he articulated the view of his party by stating that the ‘Country party will not sit with this man [Peter Nelson-Gracie] in Coalition government if he is fluky enough to win’ the by-election (*Courier-Mail*, 7 March 1968). Ahern told audiences he was ‘honoured’ by the presence of Chalk at his first campaign meeting. Many of the election meetings were, however, rowdy affairs with open antagonism between Country and Liberal Party members. Some Liberals responded to the news of Chalk attending Ahern’s launch with chagrin—sometimes interjecting at meetings with cries of ‘we don’t want him’ and that their leader was a ‘captive’.

The result of the Landsborough by-election held on 16 March was a comprehensive victory to the Country Party. Ahern secured more than 51 per cent of the primary vote against his ALP rival on 29 per cent. The ‘independent-liberal’, Nelson-Gracie, managed a respectable 18.97 per cent in the ballot. After Ahern won the seat, a *Courier-Mail* (18 March 1968) editorial claimed that the result was welcome news for the government and that Liberal ‘wrangling’ had not ‘sent people scurrying to embrace the Labor party’. It warned:

Landsborough should not, however, encourage continued division within the Liberal party. The unofficial Liberal candidate’s vote, while not a poor one, showed that an official Liberal would not have had any chance of winning, as the State Liberal Executive believed all along... the Liberal party should not avoid three-cornered contests, but should be discriminating in the seats it contested. There could be a lesson for the Country party, too, in the Landsborough result. It is that if the two parties are to work in harmony there must be fair ‘give-and-take’ by both. Another Landsborough-type by-election might not have as happy a result as Saturday’s voting, or leave either the Liberal party or the Coalition healthy. (*Courier-Mail*, 18 March 1968).

Landsborough marked the beginning of a period of Liberal assertion within the Coalition, which would continually widen the rift between the two parties.

A brief parliamentary interlude

The second session of the thirty-eighth Parliament sat for only 14 days while Pizzey was Premier. The sitting days began on 19 March and were adjourned on 17 April. The first sitting day was marked by an adjournment motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition on a matter of urgent public importance. Jack Houston wrote to the Speaker about the 'necessity for a Bill to be introduced to make provision for the equitable distribution of electoral districts' especially given the proximity of the next election and the length of time required to undertake such a redistribution. Houston refrained from making an emotional speech about malapportionment or gerrymandering, rather choosing to stress how the current 'electoral districts of Queensland are so much out of line with the desires of the 1958 redistribution that it would be against the intention of the Act at that time to have an election on the present boundaries' (*QPD* 1968:vol. 248, p. 2394). This was an astute ploy as it forced the government to attempt a defence of the electoral situation when the population growth rates were considerably out of kilter with the ratios of representation laid out in the government's own legislation of a decade before. Labor speakers claimed that in 1968 19 electorates were over quota (with enrolments over the 20 per cent permissible margin under the act), whereas the government had earlier used the argument that 11 electorates were over quota as the stimulus for the 1958 redistribution. Houston told the Parliament that on the basis of the March 1967 electoral rolls, some electorates such as Salisbury, with (18 857 electors), were 66 per cent over the metropolitan quota of votes of 11 383; Aspley was 64 per cent over, Mount Gravatt was 53 per cent over and Mount Coot-tha was 42 per cent over quota. He pointed out that other metropolitan electorates such as Brisbane were down to 9559 electors and well under quota. Labor's deputy leader, Percy Tucker, supported his leader in the debate but added nothing new except to challenge the Liberal members present to support the opposition's call for an urgent redistribution on the grounds that they would also stand to benefit.

The Premier in his 'maiden speech as Premier' began by castigating the adjournment debate as a great example of 'political humbug'. The government recognised that it had been 10 years since the last redistribution and that many electorates were now over quota. These facts were not in dispute. Its defence, however, was that compared with 1957 when Labor was last in government the situation was not as grave. Pizzey claimed that the proportion of electorates outside the quota margins was less in 1967 than a decade earlier. He argued that a total of 10 529 electors state-wide were above or below quota compared

with a massive 33 330 in 1957 (claiming this represented only 3 per cent of the state-wide roll in 1968 compared with 11 per cent in 1957). Criticising Labor's intentional malapportionment in the 1950s, the Premier reminded the opposition members

of some of the figures that satisfied them as being fair and reasonable, figures that did not indicate to them that there was any degree of urgency for a redistribution. In Mt Gravatt, in 1957 there were 25,944 electors compared with a country seat of 4,311. Again, the Kedron electorate... had 19,367 electors, yet Flinders had a mere 4,406. Today the disparity in the number of voters is nowhere comparable with what it was in the last year in which Labour was in office. (*QPD* 1968:vol. 248, p. 2398)

Pizzey went on to boast 'we can hold our heads high in relation to what we have done in the way of electoral redistribution compared with what Labour did' (*QPD* 1968:vol. 248, p. 2399). The Deputy Premier, Gordon Chalk, was more circumspect, accusing the Leader of the Opposition of desperation because 'not being able to get into power under existing electoral boundaries, he gambles that he could not be any worse off under any new set-up'. Chalk also recognised that he knew 'as well as anyone that what the Opposition is endeavouring to do is to manoeuvre itself into a position from which it may be possible for it to drive a wedge between the parties forming the coalition Government' (*QPD* 1968:vol. 248, p. 2401).

Chalk went on to say that he hoped for the Liberals' sake that the redistribution would be undertaken after the next election (insisting 'I state quite candidly that I believe it will be during 1970'). Squirming to keep his dual loyalties in place, Chalk argued that now was not the right time for the redistribution, but volunteered his personal view:

I believe the time will arrive when the Government will be only too happy to arrange for a redistribution which, I believe, must take place when there is the growth occurring that has taken place in this State. We all know that there are boom areas in certain localities, but one cannot upset the whole of the State simply because of growth in a particular locality. (*QPD* 1968:vol. 248, p. 2401)

Despite supporting the need for redistribution in the future, he was not, of course, prepared to support the motion in the adjournment debate. After a three-hour debate, the vote for the adjournment was lost on party lines 25–42.

The remaining sitting days were consumed with routine matters. Question time was much the same, with questions on the dumping of pineapples and bananas, egg prices, flights provided by a private firm for a minister, the resignation of female teachers and flood mitigation works. Most legislative measures were

amendment bills (for example, Succession Act Amendment Bill, Audit Acts Amendment Bill, Lands Act Amendment Bill) and warranted little controversy or debate. On the third sitting day of the year, Ted Walsh (Ind., Bundaberg) rose to raise a matter of privilege regarding support services to Members of Parliament—in particular, secretarial assistance for the typing of letters. Walsh referred to a letter from the Speaker to all members informing them that secretarial services would be restricted to 30 minutes per member per sitting day (on non-sitting days, members did their own typing). Walsh felt that the Speaker's ruling was harsh, that the secretarial services had not kept pace with the increase in workload and that some members used secretarial services improperly to have speeches typed that they were to read in the House. Walsh argued:

As at December 1949, there were 62 electorates and 694,035 electors in Queensland, and there were five members on the typing staff of this House. In 1966 there were 78 electorates, an increase of 16, and 882,683 electors, and there is now a typing staff of eight...When I entered this House in 1950 representing the electorate of Bundaberg, there were 9,900 on the roll. Today there are 15,071, an increase of 5,171. It is only natural that, as a member representing an electorate which has shown an increase of 5,000 voters since 1950, I have a great deal more correspondence to attend to than I had 18 years ago. (*QPD* 1968:vol. 248, p. 2478)

The Speaker, David Nicholson, replied that he was attempting to 'streamline and ultimately speed up the return of transcribed dictation' and denied his ruling was a 'negative action'. Nicholson confessed:

Last year I made an honest endeavour to assist members with their correspondence by introducing for a trial period tape recorders on which they could dictate their messages, which would be transcribed in the typing office. Unfortunately, only two or three members took advantage of that service, and although it was discontinued it is still in mind. If any hon. member can come up with suggestions on how a new service may be introduced, I will have no hesitation in recommending accordingly. I want to give a service to hon. members.

Mr Aikens: [interjected] You should have been here when the Labour party was in power. You would have been treated like a blackfellow.

Mr Speaker: Order! Frankly, I think hon. members have known me long enough to realise that I am possibly one of the most approachable persons in the House. It has always been my honest endeavour to help members not to hinder them. (*QPD* 1968:vol. 248, pp. 2479–80)

Two of the more contentious bills presented to the Parliament concerned alcohol. The first bill sought to amend the *Inebriates Institutions Act* by allowing informal admissions to such institutions. The bill gained some debate principally because many members felt that the amendments did not go far enough in dealing with the causes of alcoholism. Labor's Harold Dean (Sandgate), an abstemious member who actively supported the Queensland Temperance League, countered that 'the cause of alcoholism is the liberalisation of drinking laws'; he was critical of the Education Department and advocated increased promotion of total abstinence in schools (*QPD* 1968:vol. 248, p. 2583). Doug Tooth, the Minister for Health, accepted the seriousness of the problem but did not accept Dean's suggestions and accused him of advocating prohibition. In summing up the debate, the minister argued that the Member for Sandgate had become a 'little bit confused' and had spoken largely about the education portfolio when the measure at hand was within the Health Minister's responsibilities.

The second drink-related bill was a personal project of the new Premier and created much heated dispute in the Chamber. Drink-driving had increasingly emerged as a major social problem, becoming a divisive political issue of the day. The Premier was personally committed to the introduction of tougher drink-driving laws and in particular to the use of the breathalyser (or breath-analyser as it was sometimes called) by police in testing suspected motorists. When the Parliament resumed, the Speaker announced that he had given permission for a 'demonstration of breath-testing devices for alcohol levels' to be available to all members in the former Legislative Council chamber of the Parliament (*QPD* 1968:vol. 248, p. 2467). In March, press reports described the Premier as the 'central figure in government moves to introduce breathalyser legislation before Easter'. The *Courier-Mail* (30 March 1968) noted that the Premier had circulated his intentions to the Coalition backbench, suggesting that 'Mr Pizzey has been commended for his system of giving party members a written outline of proposed bills' so that they can be better informed and refer to proposed legislative clauses during party-room discussions. At this stage, it was expected that a breath-alcohol limit of 0.08 per cent (or 80 milligrams of alcohol to 100 millilitres of blood) would be contained within the bill. The political correspondent for the paper reported:

If breathalyser legislation is approved it is likely to provide for a motorist with a .08 reading to be told not to drive his car for 24 hours. If he has been involved in an accident before being breathalyser checked by police he would be charged with the driving offence, with the breathalyser reading as evidence. (*Courier-Mail*, 30 March 1968)

The paper noted that the government parties were evenly divided on the wisdom of introducing such legislation. In the event, the Premier could only just muster sufficient support for his proposal and at the joint-party meeting on 3 April a

five-hour debate ensued in which many Country Party members strenuously opposed the amendments to the *Traffic Acts*. The Transport Minister, Bill Knox, introduced the legislative amendments on 5 April, claiming that ‘most importantly, the amendments are to introduce into Queensland for the first time compulsory breath and blood tests of persons suspected of driving, or being in charge of motor vehicles, whilst having a blood-alcohol content of 0.08 per cent or more in their bodies’ (QPD 1968:vol. 248, p. 2858). Motorists found with 0.08 per cent blood-alcohol content by a breathalyser were to be given compulsory blood tests. It was an offence, however, only if the motorist had a real content of 0.1 per cent (that is, 100 milligrams per 100 millilitres), which incurred a fine of \$200 and a suspension of licence. Knox, however, clearly ruled out random testing in which police could intercept drivers at will and instead argued that the bill allowed police to test a motorist only after they had first ‘observed that there is either a breach of the Traffic Act or an accident, or erratic driving behaviour’ (QPD 1968:vol. 248, p. 2860). Other government members spoke of the provisions being long overdue, even courageous, and a vital safeguard to the community.

The opposition opposed the legislation. Its aversion was not because it was opposed to methods of reducing drink-driving, but because Labor felt the measures ‘cut right across the principle that a free citizen shall not commit himself’ (that is, not be forced by compulsion to self-incriminate oneself), and that the ‘mild’ measures proposed in this legislation would quickly ‘become very drastic’ (QPD 1968:vol. 248, p. 2861). They accused the government of ‘bulldozing’ the legislation through at the end of a short session of parliament without due deliberation. The opposition’s case, however, was not entirely convincing and government members noted that after more than seven hours of debate, the Parliament had been presented with only ‘a good deal of heat which has shed very little light on the Opposition’s attitude to this matter’ (QPD 1968:vol. 248, p. 3049). Col Bennett (ALP, South Brisbane) made a bizarre contribution towards the end of the long parliamentary debate, illustrating the opposition’s awkward position on the bill. He spoke from personal experience of defending drunk-drivers in court and claimed that it would be the ‘decent, law-abiding citizen’ who would suffer under the legislation, which he believed was only a ‘revenue producer for the government’. He concocted some specious reasoning for opposing the bill, which at one point included

a person could well drive home absolutely sober, not having had one drink, but, having parked his car in the garage, having got into his pyjamas and sat around in his family circle, proceeds to have a few Scotches, some beer, or some other alcohol that is to his liking. If the police saw him driving through, say, West End at half-past nine, they would be entitled to go to his home at any time up to half-past

eleven and force him to take a breathalyser test. If it showed an adverse reaction, they could then cart him off to the police station against his will, using such force as was necessary...Those are real Gestapo tactics. It is a shocking incursion into the rights of a private individual, and I do not see any need for it...The average hon. member opposite...who often gets his alcohol limit up to .08 and drives home successfully, will be the one in jeopardy, and the way this Bill is being introduced, I think this State will be very sorry indeed that it introduced legislation of this nature, rushed in at the end of the short sitting in the early part of the year before Parliament had time to examine it properly. I know that the Country Party has not had time to examine it because its members have not even made any submissions on it. Certainly the legislation was conceived in haste and doubtless we will repent of it at leisure. (*QPD* 1968:vol. 248, pp. 3055–6)

The breathalyser amendments provided considerable controversy at the end of the second session of the thirty-eighth Parliament. Two separate votes at the final stages of the bill secured its passage, with the government mustering on the first occasion 38 to 22 votes on the floor, and after the dinner break 34 to 22 (with the discrepancies due to some government members not finding it necessary to remain in the Chamber). The Minister, Bill Knox, subsequently announced that 23 breathalysers would be purchased and operational by August. This was not, however, the end of the matter. The legislative provisions concerning drink-driving were destined to be revisited on many occasions after this initial debate with the next major amendments—reducing the levels of permissible alcohol in the blood to 0.08—occurring in April 1974.

On adjourning the parliamentary session, Pizzey paid tribute to the Parliamentary Draftsman, John (Jack) Seymour, who was retiring after 34 years of service to the Queensland Parliament. The Premier noted that Seymour had served 12 parliaments and six premiers. The indebtedness relayed by the Premier was reiterated by the Opposition Leader, Jack Houston, the Speaker, David Nicholson, and one of the longest-serving members in the House, Ted Walsh, the independent Member for Bundaberg and former Labor Treasurer. Pizzey acknowledged that the job of the draftsman was difficult and the subject of some parody at times. He recited a verse composed apocryphally by one of Seymour's predecessors, which read:

I'm the Parliamentary Draftsman, and they tell me it's a fact
 That I often make a muddle of a simple little Act,
 I'm a target for the critics, and they take me in their stride—

Oh, how nice to be a critic of a job you've never tried. (*QPD* 1968:vol. 248, p. 3099)

As was conventional, the Premier moved the motion of adjournment to end the session of parliament on the evening of Wednesday 17 April. It was the last parliamentary duty Pizzey would perform.

Pizzey' legacy as Premier: a short but promising tenure

The Pizzey government got off to a promising start. Given his wealth of experience, Jack Pizzey settled comfortably into the responsibilities and routine of his new position as Premier. Pizzey intended to continue the administrative style of the Nicklin years built on ministerial competence and close teamwork. Once the jockeying for ministerial positions was over, cabinet was relatively harmonious and consensual. The Pizzey government also continued to stress the importance of development and the provision of basic services to the regions of Queensland. Moreover, after some years of drought, economic and climatic conditions improved in the first half of 1968, lifting the spirits especially of farmers who received ample rains for the first time in more than a decade. Everything appeared to be favouring the revitalised Country Party as it entered the lead-up to the next state election, due by mid-1969.

As a new premier, Pizzey was anxious to promote initiatives with which he could be personally identified so as to distinguish himself from Nicklin. He was aware of the need to move out of the shadows of his former leader, especially as the Labor opposition had criticised him as a 'political lightweight' who could not put his own stamp on the Premiership. In this context, Pizzey was reputedly interested in introducing reforms to parliamentary procedure and involving party members from both parties more in the deliberations of government. Shortly after the Premier's death, a Liberal backbencher and 'ginger group' member, John Murray (Clayfield), told the Assembly that Pizzey had been interested in introducing a parliamentary committee of review into the third session of the thirty-eighth Parliament (late 1968 to 1969). Although the committee was never formally proposed or established, Murray claimed in the next Parliament that '[t]he late Mr Pizzey went very close to setting up a committee on subordinate legislation, but unfortunately he passed on. I feel that he would have given us that committee' (*QPD* 1971:vol. 257, p. 504).

The Deputy Premier, Gordon Chalk, meanwhile was being lured by offers of employment from an American company in the private sector. His initial interest in a possible career move was sparked by divisions within the Liberal

Party and some dissatisfaction with his leadership. After some soul-searching, Chalk decided not to accept the business position, but to remain Deputy Premier. To tempt him from politics, the company had offered a much higher salary than his ministerial pay cheque and, in late April 1968, when Chalk announced his decision to refuse the offer, this was an issue that he made a point of emphasising as a way of demonstrating the sacrifices he was prepared to make for the party and his public duty. The *Courier-Mail* (22 April 1968) greeted the Treasurer's decision by editorialising that he 'retains the prospects of further political advancement' and 'it is possible that one day the State will have a Liberal Premier'. The paper went on to note that 'the fact that he was offered a substantially higher salary for a not-very-senior post in an American company suggests that there should be a review of State ministerial pay'.

The inadequacy of ministerial salaries did not deter the Country Party from debating the merits of increasing the size of the ministry from 13 to 14 ministers. At the party's conference in May, a motion to establish a Minister of Decentralisation and add a new portfolio to the ministry was narrowly defeated by 57 votes to 54. The resolution came from rural delegates eager to follow New South Wales' model in assigning responsibility for decentralisation policies to a specific minister. The motion was opposed by the Premier and the former Premier, who argued that present arrangements were adequate and that decentralisation issues could not be handled by a single minister as such issues occurred across the range of existing portfolios. There was also an overt political aspect to the motion. Had the resolution been successful this would have in turn created problems within the Coalition over the respective proportion of ministers each claimed. Country Party members would have expected such a new ministry to go to a Country Party MLA (giving it eight to six in the cabinet), whereas the Liberals would attempt to insist on equal representation of seven ministers each. Not surprisingly, given the existing tensions in the Coalition, the Country Party leaders were reluctant to buy into this potential controversy unnecessarily. An alternative solution to increase the size of the ministry by two (allowing one additional minister each and preserving the majority of the Country Party) was not acceptable to Pizzey at this time (although later this would occur to accommodate the aspirations of the Coalition backbench).

By July 1968, after six months in the top job, Pizzey was described by local journalists as being 'firmly in the saddle'. The mid-term change of leadership appeared without hitch. And by now, Pizzey was 'preparing to launch new policies' because he foresaw increases in state revenues:

On the general political front, perhaps Mr Pizzey's major achievement is the smooth transition from the Nicklin leadership. Having consolidated...

[he has] stepped out in his own right...His informality is appealing. His readiness to throw away his prepared speech and get down to the 'chit chat' level has won him many friends. (*Courier-Mail*, 15 July 1968)

One senior journalist, Logan Sligo, who was shortly to work for the Attorney-General, Peter Delamothe, as press secretary, wrote at this time that Pizzey

delivering a serious speech can be a man of authority, who insists that he be listened to...[He] is a man wanting to put people at their ease by sensing and discussing the things they are interested in—be it politics, sport or bringing up children in the 1960s...He feels secure in his ability to lead and in his knack of being able to deal with people and situations. (*Courier-Mail*, 15 July 1968)

In the parliamentary recess, Pizzey made three important trips as Premier. One overseas trip was particularly gruelling, involving a month-long journey to Britain, Switzerland (where he represented Queensland's interests at the international sugar negotiations held in Geneva) and to Japan for negotiations about the prospects for an iron and steel works for Queensland. This was followed directly by a visit to Canberra for the Premiers' Conference and Loans Council in late June, then followed immediately by a political tour of the state's northern regions—his only major tour of the state while Premier. He was also preparing to revisit Geneva in the near future to help secure a new sugar agreement if his presence would assist Australia's case at another world conference. In retrospect, the full itinerary and arduous travelling schedule Pizzey maintained during the winter recess could have added to the strain on his health.

Returning by plane from the sugar conference talks in Switzerland on 16 June, Pizzey prepared for the impending Premiers' Conference and Loans Council. Attending with Treasurer Chalk in late June, Pizzey argued against the Commonwealth's contractionary fiscal approach and gained a 10 per cent increase in financial assistance grants, but was reportedly 'disappointed' with the Commonwealth's offer of only an additional \$4 million for works and housing projects. Because Queensland received generous revenue assistance, Treasurer Chalk immediately announced that three new concessions would be introduced in the September budget (reduced rail freight charges for grain growers, reduced transport taxes and direct financial assistance to independent schools) (*Courier-Mail*, 29 June 1968). The Premier also attempted to extract Commonwealth support separately for other major state projects. Shortly before the Premier died, the cabinet decided to seek further Commonwealth financial assistance of up to \$200 million to build a power station in central Queensland. Pizzey and Chalk were active in championing this idea.

The third tour, to the state's north, began in early July and was organised for political reasons with the intention of rebuilding harmony between the Coalition partners. Pizzey prioritised his three immediate political tasks as

1. At a parliamentary level...to give back-benchers, including the Liberal 'ginger group' a greater say on legislation before it was introduced.
2. At the party executive level...[to] counsel against statements that would provoke the Hartwig-led Liberal Executive.
3. At the Country Party grass-root level...[to] set about strengthening the party organisation in winnable seats. (*Courier-Mail*, 15 July 1968)

Some of these strategies had been attempted from the start, with the Premier going to great lengths to prevent Liberal members from attacking government legislation in the Assembly. On controversial issues, however, such as the breathalyser legislation, the Premier had often had more trouble from his own party, and reputedly 'had to be as persuasive in getting Country party members to accept the breathalyser legislation as he had been in overcoming their hostility to preferential voting some years previously' (*Courier-Mail*, 15 July 1968). While on the tour, he chaired a cabinet meeting at Mareeba, visited a number of regional centres and assisted in membership drives for the party. He also helped ensure the preselection of Valmond Bird—a credible candidate for the seat of Burdekin and a likely gain for the Country Party at the next election after the retirement of the longstanding conservative independent, Arthur Coburn. The Country Party had not stood candidates against Coburn because of his local popularity and propensity to support the government. After the tour, Pizzey returned home to Brisbane on 14 July.

In mid-July, the new Premier became embroiled—much to his distaste—in the acrimonious internal politics of the Liberal Party. Liberal infighting once again erupted, this time over the proceedings of the party's 1968 convention. And once again personality clashes were instrumental in fuelling the disputes. Criticisms of the party's internal difficulties were publicly expressed in mid-July when the high-profile Liberal Member for Wavell, Alex Dewar, announced his resignation from the party. Dewar had served as Minister for Labour and Industry (1963–65) and then Minister for Industrial Development (1965–67) and had served as the party's deputy leader from 1965 to 1967, and in some quarters was considered a prospective candidate for the party leadership. In announcing his resignation and intention of remaining in the Parliament as an independent (and vowing to stand as an independent for the seat of Wavell), Dewar remembered that he had been asked to join the party by Ken Morris (a subsequent party leader and Deputy Premier), who told him the Liberal Party would be 'a party of change, a vital party composed of people who were weary

of the complacency of the old anti-socialist forces and who were anxious to bring a new look to Queensland politics' (*Courier-Mail*, 16 July 1968). Dewar castigated the contemporary Liberal Party for its disloyalty towards him and for stacking the most recent party convention:

During the 21 years to 1967 I gave of my utmost in the furtherance of the ideals of Liberalism and in particular in loyal and faithful service. Following the gross act of disloyalty meted out to me over 12 months ago I debated whether I should remain a member of the party...It was not my intention to depart from [the party] until the farce of the 1968 convention manifested itself. For the first time in my 22 years of association with the party I saw things happening that members over the years had deplored as being activities that occurred only in the Labor party. The commencement of [the] convention with obvious pre-organised numbers of committed votes. The appointment of proxy delegates in direct conflict with the constitution. The placing of the chairman in the invidious position of having to allow delegates, who were unconstitutionally present, to vote on whether or not they had the right to participate. The holding of a ballot at a time not laid down in the agenda for the all too obvious reason that the time was propitious as the known committed voting strength was present. The exodus of delegates after the voting for executive positions, making it obvious that their only purpose in being present was to cast votes in a pre-determined manner. The Gilbertian situation which unfolded itself throughout the first two days of [the] convention was, in my view, completely foreign to the idealism that surrounded the formation of the party in the early 'forties'. (*Courier-Mail*, 16 July 1968)

The party president, Eric Robinson (later Federal Member for McPherson and Finance Minister, 1977–80), rejected Dewar's explanation of the convention but regretted the member's action. He implied that the blame was with Dewar and stated he would 'make no comment on the reason for your resignation from cabinet 12 months ago as this does not come within my province' (*Courier-Mail*, 16 July 1968). The party leader, Gordon Chalk (a former rival of Dewar's), had fewer qualms when he declared in the Parliament that Dewar had been accused of behaviour unbecoming a Minister of the Crown and that his resignation had been arranged as a face-saving measure for all concerned. In resigning from the ministry and then from the party, Dewar maintained he was innocent of sexual harassment, denying that he 'had been guilty of any act that could be called "immoral or illegal"' (*Courier-Mail*, 16 July 1968). He was prepared to let the people judge his behaviour at the next election. When given the chance, however, the Wavell electors ousted the newly independent Dewar from his safe seat, returning the official Liberal candidate, Dr Arthur Crawford, in May 1969.

Occurring during the winter parliamentary break, the Dewar episode represented a sordid affair in the short life of the Pizzey government. Personalities among the more senior members of the Liberal Party had played a large part in the prosecution of the scandal. The Premier issued a short statement genuinely regretting that Dewar was resigning from the Coalition.

The sudden death of Jack Pizzey

Shortly before midnight on 31 July 1968, Jack Pizzey, aged fifty-seven, passed away at Chermerside Hospital. He had suffered a major heart attack—his second while in the ministry. The *Courier-Mail* (1 August 1968) announced the news the next morning with a front-page headline ‘PREMIER IS DEAD—Mr Pizzey succumbs to a sudden heart attack’. The report noted the Acting Premier, Gordon Chalk, offered his condolences to the Pizzey family and described the loss as ‘tragic’. The former Premier, Frank Nicklin, on returning home from a Miss Australia event in Nambour, told reporters that it was ‘distressing to think that just as he was doing such a great job he has been taken’ and that Queensland had ‘suffered a great loss—the loss of a man whom I think would have proved himself a grand leader’. Jack Houston, the Opposition Leader, commented: ‘I think it is a dreadful loss to the State to lose a Premier in office.’ Houston recalled that despite political differences, Pizzey was ‘always regarded as a first rate gentleman by the Opposition’. The Police Commissioner, Frank Bischof, was another to pay tribute, remembering that Pizzey ‘had been a wonderful Minister in charge of police, and a Premier with a thorough understanding of the police force and all its problems’. Bischof solemnly announced the news of the Premier’s death to a police social function late on Wednesday evening:

The news of Mr Pizzey’s death reached Cloudland ballroom just before balloons were to be released at the annual police ball attended by Mr Bjelke-Petersen, Mr Houston and Mr Bischof. Mr Bischof called for a minute’s silence in the memory of the former Police Minister and senior policemen stood with bowed heads. Couples who seconds before had been dancing stood to attention in silent tribute. (*Courier-Mail*, 1 August 1968)

In other comments, the former Premier was described as a ‘kindly, friendly man’ who knew his ‘health was suspect’ when he assumed office. Press eulogies painted him as a cautious leader, who nevertheless ‘developed confidence and a style of his own that promised to make him one of Queensland’s distinctive Premiers’. He was also judged to have ‘won a firm grip over his party at all levels, and was beginning to assert himself as the State’s administrative head’ (*Courier-Mail*, 1 August 1968).

Pizzey was honoured with a state funeral on 2 August 1968. The service was held at St John's Cathedral and the funeral procession wound through city streets before heading to the Albany Creek Crematorium. In the subsequent Address-in-Reply debate, Bill Hewitt (Lib., Chatsworth) recalled the state funeral in delivering what he considered 'the finest epitaph' for the former Premier: 'he lived with gusto; he died doing the things he wanted to do; his nation's flag draped his casket; and a grateful people honoured his memory' (*QPD* 1968:vol. 249, p. 212).

When the Parliament resumed for its third session on 20 August, it had been intended that a celebration would occur to mark the centenary of the first sitting of the Parliament in the present building. Instead, the occasion was marked by its solemnity and gloom with the obituaries to Pizzey conveying a sense of shock and a bipartisan appreciation of his public and personal qualities. Those who spoke included: the Governor, Sir Alan Mansfield; the new Premier, Joh Bjelke-Petersen; the Deputy Premier, Gordon Chalk; the Opposition Leader, Jack Houston; the QLP leader, Les Diplock; Alex Dewar, Tom Aikens, Vince Jones (many of these members were colleagues who entered the Parliament at the same election in April 1950) and finally Jim Donald, the Deputy Opposition Leader. Many spoke of how proud they were to have known or worked with the late Premier. Others remembered his genuineness and commitment to the causes for which he strove. The Governor spoke of the state having 'suffered a grievous loss'; the new Premier also knew that all members were 'deeply shocked' and that 'Parliament and Queensland are the poorer for his passing'. The Premier continued:

In the short time in which he was Premier—just a little more than six months—he won the affection, respect and confidence of all with whom he came in contact. Jack Pizzey had the difficult task of assuming the high office of Premier upon the retirement of Sir Francis Nicklin at the end of a record term—a period in which Sir Francis, too, won the respect and affection of all Queenslanders. But Jack Pizzey demonstrated that he had the qualities of leadership so necessary in one charged with the responsibility of leading the Government of a State as big as Queensland...People admired him for what he was endeavouring to do for the State. It was his earnest desire to provide modern amenities for people, wherever they lived in Queensland. He was also admired by his parliamentary colleagues and we all appreciated the fact that he was a fighter to the last...Jack Pizzey was admired because he devoted a lifetime of service to the community and to our State. (*QPD* 1968:vol. 249, pp. 5–6)

Chalk spoke of Pizzey's calibre as a minister and his devotion and dedication. He commented particularly on the 'spirit of goodwill and affection' that marked

his short premiership. Houston praised Pizzey's friendliness, tenacity and loyalty to his leader and party. Aikens remembered him visiting his Townsville home, sweating profusely while letterboxing adult education leaflets by bike; Aikens gave him the lend of his bike pump and a glass of water. Aikens admired his dedication to the job. Diplock and Dewar referred to his courage and commitment, with Dewar mentioning Pizzey's 'great capacity for forgiveness'. The last words on the condolence motion fell to Jim Donald, who was moved to

re-echo the sentiments expressed by other speakers that not only have Jack Pizzey's widow and family suffered a severe loss; the Country Party has suffered a severe loss; this Parliament has suffered a severe loss; and the State of Queensland has suffered a severe loss. (*QPD* 1968:vol. 249, p. 10)

The condolences were bipartisan, genuine and heartfelt; the Parliament was still in shock.

Chalk's 'caretaker' ministry: a week is not a long time in politics

Gordon Chalk was sworn in as Queensland's thirty-eighth Premier on 1 August. His tenure in the top job lasted only eight days inclusive—the second-shortest term as premier in the state's history. Accepting the Governor's commission, Chalk reduced the ministry from 13 to 12 and combined the portfolios of Premier, State Development and Treasurer under himself. He made no other changes to the ministry he inherited in the allocation of portfolio responsibilities. This could indicate that Chalk was well aware that he was but a caretaker premier and that the Country Party members would very shortly propose their own leader as premier. The complete Chalk ministry for the period 1–8 August was

- Premier, Minister for State Development and Treasurer: Gordon Chalk, Lib.
- Minister for Works and Housing: Joh Bjelke-Petersen, CP
- Minister for Justice and Attorney-General: Dr Peter Delamothe, Lib.
- Minister for Education and Cultural Activities: Alan Fletcher, CP
- Minister for Local Government and Conservation: Harold Richter, CP
- Minister for Primary Industries: John Row, CP
- Minister for Health: Doug Tooth, Lib.
- Minister for Labour and Tourism: John Herbert, Lib.
- Minister for Mines, Main Roads and Electricity: Ronald Camm, CP
- Minister for Transport: William Knox, Lib.

- Minister for Industrial Development: Frederick Campbell, Lib.
- Minister for Lands: Victor Sullivan, CP

Chalk had earned a reputation as a serious and hard-working minister under the Nicklin and Pizzey governments. He was highly regarded as a capable and effective treasurer. He had frequently served as Acting Premier while Nicklin was either away from Brisbane or was ill in hospital in the last year of his term in office. Well before Pizzey became Premier in January 1968, there had been some discussion in media and business circles that Chalk had earned the right to be the next Coalition Premier. Early press reports mentioned that ‘in some influential quarters in Brisbane there is a “Chalk for Premier” movement’ (*Courier-Mail*, 2 December 1967). This was despite ‘the stark political fact’ that in the Assembly the Country Party retained 26 members to the Liberal Party’s 19—and that the Country Party members were not prepared to cede their political advantage to a Liberal leader however competent or admired (*Courier-Mail*, 2 August 1968). Some reports mentioned that many Country Party members held Chalk in high regard and referred to growing pressure for Chalk to remain Premier until at least the next state election, due in 1969. Realistically, however, his only chance of remaining Premier was if the Country Party could not agree on a successor and unite behind a single candidate. If the Country Party remained divided over the leadership issue (between the Works Minister, Joh Bjelke-Petersen, and Mines and Main Roads Minister, Ron Camm), they risked elevating Chalk to the position as a compromise candidate. Another possibility—perhaps somewhat remote in hindsight—was for Chalk himself to switch parties and lead the Country Party (especially as he came from a country electorate, had many close links with Country Party members and, of course, other senior Liberals were subsequently to make precisely this switch in other circumstances). Either Chalk never contemplated this move or the Country Party’s leadership was resistant, because the Country Party remained loyal to its own kith and kin.

Chalk had also been under pressure from within his own party to assert the influence of the Liberal Party and liberalism more generally. Since December 1965, when Chalk became the Liberal leader, he had been under increasing pressure from his colleagues to articulate a stronger identity for the party. Some Liberals even harboured separatist sentiments. Given the Liberals were the junior partners in the Coalition, the pressure from below left Chalk walking a precarious tightrope. By the end of 1967, however, Chalk was convinced the Liberals had to ‘attain supremacy’ in government over the Country Party and that ‘this state is destined to be governed principally by those who follow the Liberal party platform’ (*Courier-Mail*, 2 September 1967). This was an enormous step for someone who had once been described by the Labor opposition as a political chameleon with ‘one foot in the Liberal party camp and the other in the Country party camp’ (*QPD* 1958:vol. 222, p. 1623).

The possibility of a Liberal-led administration emboldened the local Liberal-leaning press. The *Courier-Mail* ran a courageous editorial on 2 August strongly supporting Chalk as Premier and describing the likely moves by the Country Party to remove him as not in the best interests of the state. The editorial stated that it was 'important for the State and for the Government that Mr Pizzey's successor be the best possible man for the post' (*Courier-Mail*, 2 August 1968). In the editor's opinion, that person was Chalk. The editorial continued:

It would be sensible if the government parties, when they meet to discuss the formation of a new government decided to appoint Mr Chalk to head the government. Mr Chalk has had great experience as Deputy Premier and Acting Premier and just as important, has been highly involved—and still is involved—in most important negotiations concerning the attraction of investment to the State. It would be a great advantage for Queensland to have Mr Chalk undertake these negotiations with the prestige and power of head of the government. To suggest Mr Chalk is not to criticise the abilities of the Country party's Deputy Leader, Mr Bjelke-Petersen, who as acting leader of the Coalition party with the most members, probably could obtain the necessary support, on strict party lines, for the post. The important thing is for the State to get the best advantage it can from Mr Chalk's negotiating abilities and experience. (*Courier-Mail*, 2 August 1968)

In the face of such pressure, the Country Party was anxious to appoint a successor. They called a party meeting for 2 August and announced that Joh Bjelke-Petersen was likely to be unopposed as the new leader of the Country Party. It was important to nip any talk of a Liberal premiership in the bud. The *Courier-Mail* (3 August 1968) reported the next morning that

[a]fter last night's brief meeting, Country party members said there could be no question of accepting the Parliamentary Liberal leader (Mr Chalk)...who is now Premier of the caretaker Cabinet [sic]. A senior minister, not always favourably disposed to Mr Bjelke-Petersen, said: 'The numbers are the only things that matter in politics. This is the only Parliament in Australia in which the Country party has them. We'd be the laughing stock of the Commonwealth if we surrendered our right to the Premiership.'

Bjelke-Petersen reportedly commanded the votes of 20 members of the 26-member parliamentary party, but no formal vote was taken as he was appointed unopposed. In a ballot for the deputy's position, the Mines and Main Roads Minister, Ron Camm, easily defeated the Education Minister, Alan Fletcher, with 'support from three-quarters' of the party (Hughes 1980:28). Party members told reporters somewhat prophetically that the new leader 'had

a mind of his own and would not be influenced by pressure groups' (*Courier-Mail*, 3 August 1968). At a joint-party meeting on 7 August, Bjelke-Petersen was elected leader of the government on party lines (despite an announcement that he had been selected unanimously). On 8 August, Chalk tendered his resignation and that of his ministry to the Governor and the first Bjelke-Petersen ministry was subsequently sworn in. Interestingly, Frank Nicklin had predicted in his scrapbooks that Bjelke-Petersen would one day lead the party, shortly after the transport controversy of the mid 1960s, which had damaged Chalk's reputation with rural Queenslanders.

A turbulent year but an important watershed

The year 1968 was a watershed year; it was a year of momentous leadership transition, with four premiers holding the reins of office in eight months. It also symbolised the end of one political era and the beginning of another. It ended the old-style Country Party leadership founded on the enduring partnership between Nicklin and Pizzey and heralded the new era under Bjelke-Petersen. At the time, such a transition was not readily apparent. Certainly some in the Country Party considered the new Premier—who, at fifty-seven and already with 21 years' experience in the Parliament—was most likely to serve for a term or two before handing over to a younger generation of leader. There were serious concerns within the Country Party that the new Premier could be an electoral liability and out of tune with the changing times. Despite such concerns about his popularity, Bjelke-Petersen was to lead the government for almost 20 years. When he was eventually removed from the Premiership by his own party, the two principal leaders of the party, Frank Nicklin and Joh Bjelke-Petersen, had together led the Country Party for 46 years, from 1941 to 1987 (with only a six-month interruption under Pizzey). The Country Party's emphasis on continuity stood in stark contrast with the brooding discontent and instability that emerged in the Liberal Party and in the Coalition relationship, which increased spectacularly from the initial years of Bjelke-Petersen's premiership.