

11. All power corrupts, 1976–1980

With Whitlam now gone—replaced by the Fraser Coalition government in Canberra—the Bjelke-Petersen government could ostensibly look forward to better relations with the Federal Government. Yet although relations had improved, they remained frosty rather than poisonous. The Premier never warmed to the new Prime Minister and within a few years was accused of having ‘traded Gough Whitlam for Malcolm Fraser’ in the demonisation stakes in order to appear the strongman of local politics. Federal spending was also being trimmed and the ample largesse of yesteryear that states enjoyed was no more. The economic recession of the mid-1970s was steadily worsening, with increasing unemployment and cutbacks to federal funding making the situation on the ground worse. Parochialism remained an appealing reaction.

Queensland’s own budgetary situation was deteriorating. As a belt-tightening measure, the Premier was so moved in April 1976 that he cancelled his monthly promotional television program (the ‘Joh Show’) to save taxpayers \$127 000 per annum. The opposition had been calling this program a ‘widespread abuse and extravagant spending of public moneys for party political purposes’ or a political adventure that was merely delivering propaganda (*QPD* 1977:vol. 272, p. 2339). At the same time, the Premier began running government advertisements in newspapers extolling the virtues of his government under the headline ‘The Premier reports’, with much of the copy sounding suspiciously like Allen Callaghan’s polished words. Over the next few years, however, he also continued spending on ‘Joh films’ paid for by allocations in the Premier’s Department budget (‘miscellaneous expenses’), which chronicled his public engagements and was intended to produce special films that would promote the ‘life story and achievements of the Premier’ (*QPD* 1980:vol. 282, p. 390). Such filming was always intended for public release and was often planted with regional television stations (including one in which Callaghan pretended to interview the Premier even though he was his media officer).

In April 1976, the Parliament established a privileges committee to both protect members from the public and discipline members who abused privilege. The six-man committee included three Nationals (the party Whip, Mike Ahern, Lin Powell and John Warner), two Liberals (Bill Hewitt and Charles Porter) and Jack Houston from the ALP. The new committee could have had immediate business as two National ministers, Russ Hinze and Neville Hewitt, proceeded to have an enormous row in mid-April over the provisions of the Noise Abatement Bill—first in the joint-party meeting and then continuing on in the Assembly. The ‘shouting match’ erupted over the restrictions on lawnmowing times on

weekdays and weekends and over what ‘excessive noise’ in fact meant. The initial bill proposed that householders who mowed before 7am on weekdays and 9am on weekends would face a \$200 fine; it also stipulated that any ‘excessive noise’ from a vehicle, appliance, piece of equipment or a musical instrument audible to other residents would be in breach of the law! Instead of referring the ministerial dispute to the privileges committee, however, the joint-party meeting deferred the matter to the August session to allow for further consideration.

Sculpting a legacy: the ‘tax crusade’ and the passing away of death duties

Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen had for some years sought to reduce or abolish taxes to cement his image as a right-wing ‘small government’ reformer. In early 1976, he chose to champion the abolition of a very visible tax—death duties—much to his own Treasurer’s chagrin. When a leak of the Premier’s crusading intention appeared on the front page of the *Courier-Mail*, Gordon Chalk was mystified. He told the Parliament in answer to an opposition question asked by Tom Burns: ‘I think I would be misleading the House if I did not say that I was astounded at what I read on the front page of “The Courier-Mail” this morning. I had no knowledge of it...This article has caused me considerable concern’ (*QPD* 1976:vol. 270, p. 2689). The issue of tax relief split the Coalition, with the Nationals favouring the complete abolition of death duties and payroll tax, while the Liberals favoured only their reduction over time. At the April Premiers’ Conference, the Queensland Premier raised the issue with his interstate colleagues, who did not publicly oppose his plan. When asked by the new Member for Cunningham, Tony Elliott, whether the abolition of death duties was a *fait accompli*, the Premier responded:

My first concern is for Queenslanders and all who live in our State; what other States do is their affair. I have been disturbed for a long time by the effects of probate and succession duty on a very wide section of the community. Death duties were originally a wealth tax but they are now hitting people in all walks of life and can no longer be called a wealth tax in anyone’s language...Doubtless, the abolition of death duties would generate a lot of interest in our State. A lot of assets and very much business will ultimately be brought to Queensland when this suggestion is taken up by Cabinet and the party and implemented. (*QPD* 1976:vol. 270, p. 2771)

Bjelke-Petersen then successfully ambushed the Treasurer, Chalk, at a cabinet meeting in June 1976 at which he proposed to abolish death duties in the forthcoming budget before proceeding to call immediately for cabinet approval.

Bjelke-Petersen's proposal was purely verbal; he brought no written submission to the table nor had he circulated any formal documentation before the meeting. There were no projected costings or estimates setting out the impact on state revenues. Chalk lost against a united wall of National Party ministers. At a joint-party room meeting the next day, only three members opposed the move to abolish death duties (Chalk along with David Byrne and Brian Lindsay; see Hazlehurst 1987:291).

While Chalk and the Treasury conducted a rearguard action to try to limit the proposal or to phase it in over a number of years (probably so it would not be entirely phased out), they estimated the abolition of the tax would cost Queensland about \$30 million in lost revenue. They had not, however, counted on the demonstration effects of the measure. Thousands of elderly Australians began moving (or moving addresses) to the Gold Coast to evade death duties. In the short term, this provided a much needed boost to the economy; but in the longer term it imposed considerable additional costs on the state government as it had to grapple with providing services to a burgeoning ageing population.

Bjelke-Petersen was gradually exerting his dominance over his cabinet. With some astuteness, he was also sculpting the legacy for which he wished to be remembered. His impetuous gambit to abolish death duties made him the darling of the Gold Coast both among property developers (the 'white-shoe brigade') and retirees, who gradually returned the compliment by continuing to vote solidly for the Coalition (and mostly the National Party) for decades to come. There was some evidence that DLP supporters had transferred their loyalty to the Nationals—a point admitted by the DLP's state president when he announced the party was being 'mothballed' in April 1976.

Basking in the glory of his recent political successes, Bjelke-Petersen was not afraid of using rant and hyperbole to attack the policies of his Labor opponents. In one debate on a matter of public interest called in early 1976, he complained vehemently:

It is not very often that I rise to participate in this debate...I want to draw to the attention of this House and of the general public something that is about to happen in this State and in this nation. Throughout history, man has had to cope with many disasters. Firstly, there was the Biblical flood and later the eruption of Vesuvius and the destruction of Pompeii, the sinking of the 'Titanic', and so on. As from Friday another monumental disaster can be added to the list, one that will affect every household in Queensland and in Australia—Medibank. (*QPD* 1976:vol. 271, p. 754)

Apparently, the Premier was able to deliver such an allegorical bluster with a straight face; he was ever the 'Lord's Premier' (Wear 2002).

Preserving Aboriginal relics

In March 1976, the Minister for Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement, Claude Wharton, introduced a bill to amend the *Aboriginal Relics Preservation Act of 1967*, claiming the state had been the first to introduce such legislation. The new amendments were designed to clarify the meaning of relics and prevent any misinterpretation, as well as allow the minister to delegate some of his powers to inspectors (such as over tourists visiting historical sites). The bill provided an opportunity for Eric Deeral, the National Party Member for Cook and the only Indigenous member of the Assembly, to comment on the government's heritage policies. Deeral considered that the government was belatedly moving to ensure the protection of relics in danger of being destroyed or lost. He said:

It is important that we preserve them, and I am happy to say that the Queensland Government has done that. I am sure that the Government today, while looking at the situation in Aurukun or any other place involving Aboriginal people, will look at these things and not lose sight of the need to preserve an almost lost culture. (*QPD* 1976:vol. 270, p. 2619)

Labor members, who did not oppose the legislation, were particularly critical of the government's failure to protect heritage sites. They criticised the poor implementation of such heritage legislation by the government and the reluctance to impose fines for any desecration. Ray Jones (ALP, Cairns) argued that '[t]his parliament should be concerned about strengthening the administration, the policing, the caretaking and the inspection of sites...in many cases the damage has been done and it is too late to reconstruct items of so delicate a nature' (*QPD* 1976:vol. 270, p. 2613).

At the time, however, Labor was more concerned about the dismissal of Works Department employees who had been sacked as part of a major downsizing exercise.

Deeral had given his maiden speech in March 1975, claiming his family ancestors had lived in Cook for 20 000 years. He called for greater development of the 'top end' and the construction of all-weather roads for his electorate so that more industry could be established. He complained about the lack of job opportunities, saying that 'no man can continually accept hand-outs without losing his initiative and self-respect'. He continued:

I am the first Aboriginal member of this House and, I think, the first Aboriginal member of any State Parliament. Because of this there are a number of things I want to make clear. The first is that my forebears were both Aborigines and Islanders, and that I am home in both English and Kokoyiminir, my native tongue, but I am first an Australian from Queensland...I am not here to press for the advantage of any particular group, but to represent honestly and fight for the advancement of my electorate and for the people who live there. I am also a member of this Government, and I am a member of it because I believe in its policies and in the future it promises for the State...Queensland has been described as a racist State; it has been referred to as the Deep North, and legislation for Aborigines and Islanders has publicly been criticised as repressive. Every opportunity has been taken to criticise the Government and the people of Queensland by many in the South who should know better. I state quite clearly that I will be prepared to discuss the attitudes of those people when the States in which they live have Aboriginal parliamentary representation. (*QPD* 1975:vol. 267, pp. 370–1)

He finished his speech criticising the ‘old hand-out philosophy of past generations’, saying it had destroyed much of the initiative of his own people.

Sir Gordon Chalk walks—leading to a contentious reshuffle

One of the perennial mainstays of the Coalition government, Sir Gordon Chalk, resigned in August 1976. He had been contemplating retiring for some time—even before the 1974 election—but had stayed on because of the early election. By early 1975, he had decided he would retire well before the next election, due in 1977. Many believed Chalk was the colossus behind the Coalition government: a man of integrity, hard work and resolve, who had a strong sense of purpose and a level head and who administered the state’s finances with an eye always to the main chance. He had represented the people of Lockyer in the Parliament continuously for just more than 26 years, and had been in the ministry constantly since August 1957, when the Coalition came to office. He had been a minister for 19 years and one day—first as Minister for Transport (1957–65), then as Treasurer (1965–76), with one week sandwiched as Premier in 1968. He became the fifth-longest serving cabinet minister in the state’s history and had earned a reputation for his prodigious work ethic. He had also been leader of the Liberal parliamentary party for a little more than one decade

and had taken the Liberals from 20 to 30 seats in the Parliament and its primary vote from 25.9 to 31.1 per cent (although in 1969 and 1972 the support for the party had gone slightly backwards).

Towards the end of his career, he had become embittered and disillusioned with Bjelke-Petersen. He had tried to disassociate himself from the Premier's strident, almost pathological hatred of Whitlam and had kept open lines of communication between the Queensland Treasury and Commonwealth ministers and their senior officials. He had not approved of the cynical tactics to break convention and appoint any Tom, Dick or Harry to senate vacancies that happened to be politically expedient at the time. As Deputy Premier, he tried to block Bjelke-Petersen mounting a state investigation into the Loans Affair conducted by sleuthing journalists in Europe who were raking for further damaging material to smear Whitlam and his former ministers. And, most recently, he had also counselled Bjelke-Petersen against abolishing death duties in 1976. On almost all these points of contention, Chalk had lost or come out on the losing side. He had had enough!

With Chalk's departure, so too went the only rival to the Premier in the cabinet. There were some potentially able ministers in cabinet—for example, Russ Hinze and Llew Edwards—but they were then relatively junior in standing. The other senior ministers were mostly of ordinary ability together with a few time-servers, with perhaps the exception of Bill Knox (who had by then been in the Parliament for 19 years). With the Liberal leadership thrown open, most parliamentary Liberals assumed that the position of party leader (and the Deputy Premier's job) would go to Knox, then forty-six, and would be an uncontested appointment. On the morning of the party-room meeting, however, a surprise challenge from Dr Arthur Crawford precipitated a party-room vote, which Knox won easily. Crawford then challenged for the deputy leader's position against Fred Campbell and John Herbert (the latter had earlier stood against Knox for the deputy's post in 1971). Crawford was eliminated in the first ballot, before Campbell narrowly defeated Herbert for the deputy leadership post. Interestingly, Knox said at his first press conference as leader that he wished to see the full amalgamation of the two Coalition parties and would prioritise this as a major target of his term as leader; in his own words, he said he wanted a 'working coalition not a confrontation coalition'. At the time of his ascension, he was spoken of in the media as 'a man of sweet reason' who would leave the government 'much more free of friction at the top' (*Courier-Mail*, 6 August 1976). While Knox claimed he had a special 'rapport' with the Premier, the opposition mischievously suggested his elevation had 'suddenly accelerated the hold the National party had on the Liberal party' (*Courier-Mail*, 7 August 1976).

The Treasury portfolio was regarded as a major prize—and it was well known that the Nationals had wanted to claim this key portfolio for themselves (indeed

the Premier had discussed such a possibility with his colleagues and been ribbed over it by the opposition in the Parliament). Although Knox, as Deputy Premier, could select his own portfolio and had indicated he wished to become Treasurer on 6 August, the Premier had second thoughts and delayed the announcement (after discussing the arrangements with Robert Sparkes and Mike Evans). The new cabinet was supposed to be announced before Monday 9 August but was delayed a further day. The Treasury post and the selection of the portfolio for the new Liberal minister (John Greenwood, Ashgrove) were given as the reasons for the delay. The new Liberal leader prevailed, however, and Knox became the third Liberal Treasurer in a row—and the second to combine Treasury with the Deputy Premier’s job (he was also given Racing and responsibility for the State Government Insurance Office). Knox immediately attacked the first federal budget of the incoming Fraser government, not over revenue transfers to Queensland (as they increased by more than \$100 million) but over the lack of action in relation to unemployment. In the resulting mini-reshuffle of Bjelke-Petersen’s fourth ministry in August 1976, Keith Hooper became Transport Minister, Bill Lickiss was transferred to the Justice and Attorney-General portfolio and the new entrant to cabinet, John Greenwood, was appointed as Minister for Survey, Valuation and Urban and Regional Affairs. The average age of the new ministry was fifty-five years, and one-third of the cabinet was at least sixty years of age.

The big loser in the reshuffle was Max Hodges, who was stripped of his Police portfolio and given the job of Minister for Tourism and Marine Services; he also resigned as Leader of the House. Hodges (and the Police Commissioner, Ray Whitrod) had both given support to a proposed inquiry to investigate allegations of police brutality at student demonstrations held in July 1976 (inviting two Scotland Yard detectives to investigate allegations), but had been defeated by the Premier in a ‘dogfight’ in cabinet the week before.¹ In cabinet, Hodges had backed the Police Commissioner’s decision to investigate, while Bjelke-Petersen chose to impose his authority, arguing that it was the students who were in the wrong not the police. After Hodges issued a press statement regretting the decision not to go ahead with a full inquiry, and claiming that a cloud remained over the police force, his tenure came under considerable pressure. It was widely speculated that he would lose the portfolio. His replacement as the new Police Minister (and Leader of the House) was Tom Newbery, who said he had ‘many friends in the force’ and promised to ‘get some harmony back into the police’ (*Courier-Mail*, 11 August 76). In making the swap, the Premier denied he had sacked the minister due to union pressure, but admitted that ‘this is an

¹ The opposition charged that cabinet’s decision to overturn the Police Commissioner’s inquiry was illegal and sought legal advice to sustain this point. The opposition believed ‘the Premier’s action constituted a dangerous deviation from well-established principles that put the special office of Police Commissioner above party political pressure’ (*Sunday Mail*, 8 August 1976).

opportunity to give a change of drivers' (*Courier-Mail*, 11 August 1976). The Premier then clarified that Police Commissioner Whitrod was not in danger of being sacked or being asked to resign. He told journalists that 'he did not regard the Commissioner's newsletter of August 8th as an implied criticism of the Premier's decision not to have an inquiry into police action during a student's march on July 29' (*Courier-Mail*, 12 August 1976). The simmering issue of police unrest, however, and the independence of the Commissioner would soon erupt in a most spectacular manner.

Cedar Bay and the departure of Commissioner Whitrod

Tensions within the police force had been brewing for some years—initially over the campaign to weed out police corruption. The issue suddenly exploded after the police launched a brutal drug raid on a 'hippie commune' based in Cedar Bay (north of Mossman). The police were being increasingly impaled on the horns of an awkward dilemma. On the one hand, Commissioner Whitrod (and the former Minister of Police, Hodges) had been attempting to reform the police force internally, making it more managerial, performance oriented and better educated. On the other hand, the government wanted to use the police as a political tool to satisfy the government's political agendas. A merit-rating system for inspectors and commissioned officers was openly criticised by senior police (and by its anti-reform union) for being secretive, open to manipulation or 'payback' and for damaging morale. The scheme was intended to feed into the promotion system so that officers would be promoted on ability—a contentious concept in a force long structured on seniority. The Commissioner had to quell disquiet at meetings of senior police officers, where he promised to provide reasons to any senior officer who was 'bypassed' for promotion (a notion conceivable only if the principle of seniority prevailed).

After the Queensland Premier ordered the police to get tough on soft drugs and rid the state of marijuana, the police abruptly raided in a 'paramilitary' fashion a small alternative community living in Cedar Bay on 29 August 1976 ostensibly to arrest drug offenders. After the military-like action, the police were criticised for storm-trooper tactics in rounding up a bunch of harmless hippies and destroying their commune by burning their shacks to the ground. They had attacked the peaceful commune with armed police, aircraft and helicopters and a navy patrol boat expecting to find a huge haul of drugs. The Premier and the new Police Minister, Tom Newbery, denied that they had authorised the raid. The police found only small quantities of cannabis grown for personal use. Two residents were arrested for personal drug use (and sent to Cooktown) and a

further 10 were fined—two for possessing cannabis but the other eight simply for vagrancy (that is, having no fixed abode or money). It soon transpired that the Cooktown court did not have the legal authority to impose jail terms or issue fines. The offenders were momentarily released and then rearrested under a court order legally issued from Cairns. Because of the widely perceived overreaction by police, an inquiry into the incident was proposed and accepted in principle by the Commissioner. The Premier, however, largely at the behest of the police unions, immediately overruled Whitrod. This led to conjecture as to who was really in command of the police: the Commissioner or the powerful police union. As the *Courier-Mail* (2 September 1976) editorialised, ‘the union now seems to sit back and loftily tell the State Government which of the Commissioner’s decisions are acceptable and which are not’. Due to public pressure, however, an internal inquiry was conducted by a senior police officer and some police officers involved in the raid were charged over the wilful destruction of property, but none was convicted and the report of the inquiry was never publicly released. The Premier further incensed the Commission by appointing Inspector Terry Lewis his Assistant Commissioner in 1976, leading immediately to Whitrod’s resignation.

Despite capturing enormous media attention, Cedar Bay did not arouse much debate in the Assembly other than the occasional question. The Speaker, Jim Houghton, told members that the Parliament could not debate the issues arising from the Cedar Bay raid because matters were before the courts and therefore sub judice. He mentioned on three separate occasions that he had received a letter from solicitors acting for a client seeking damages from the ABC’s *This Day Tonight* program. Labor members similarly did not wish to be seen as unsupportive of the government’s tough line or too closely associated with drug-users. Later, the opposition accused Bjelke-Petersen of using the Cedar Bay raid to assert his law and order credentials in a desperate attempt to win the forthcoming by-election in Chalk’s former seat of Lockyer. If the Parliament felt constrained to debate the issue, this did not prevent the Premier from releasing regular press releases justifying the government’s actions and continuing to criticise the commune residents as drug-peddlers.

Three by-elections triggered in 1976

Three by-elections were occasioned in 1976. They eventually produced a return to the status quo but added enormously to the dissention among the Coalition ranks. As the year began, Martin Hanson (ALP, Port Curtis, the son-in-law of the former Premier Ned Hanlon) resigned from the Assembly in February and died the next day; he was just fifty-two years of age and had served in the Parliament for 13 years. In March, sixty-one-year-old John Murray—one of the Liberal

‘ginger men’ who had also served 13 years in the Parliament—called it a day and resigned his seat of Clayfield. He was not always popular among his colleagues (as he had initially been a joint-endorsed candidate for the federal seat of Herbert who then swapped to the Liberals, where he emerged as a leading figure in the ‘ginger group’); and when he resigned no-one formally acknowledged his departure. His colleague Geoff Chinchen said later:

I was extremely disappointed—and I am sure that many other honourable members were also—when Mr John Murray, the former member for Clayfield, left this Chamber last Wednesday without one leader saying ‘We hope that you will enjoy your retirement’...when John Murray left not a word was said. (*QPD* 1976:vol. 270, p. 2859)

As already mentioned, Gordon Chalk resigned later in the year at the age of sixty-three.

The two initial by-elections for the seats of Port Curtis (Gladstone) and Clayfield were held on 29 May 1976. Although Labor’s Bill Prest won the Central Queensland seat, he experienced a major reversal of fortune. Labor took the seat on the primary vote with 51.75 per cent (against the Nationals on 23.9 and the Liberals on 12.8 per cent). Prest, however, suffered a significant swing away from him of 11.34 per cent, making a combined swing of more than 30 per cent against Labor in the past two elections! The result was hardly an endorsement of Labor’s new leadership or of its much-hoped-for regeneration; and in November 1976, Jack Houston was returned to the deputy leader’s position (beating Keith Wright), replacing Jack Melloy, who, at sixty-eight years of age, stood down and was not contesting the 1977 election.

In blue-ribbon Clayfield, the Liberals’ candidate, Ivan Brown, was challenged by the Nationals’ increasingly high-profile secretary, Mike Evans (as well by a Labor candidate). From the outset, it was evident that this was going to be a major stoush between the Coalition parties. The showy Evans ran a glitzy ‘American-style’ campaign ‘aimed at the Liberal Party rather than the ALP’ and focusing on the abolition of death taxes. His pitch was to urge electors to vote ‘for the one candidate in Clayfield pledged to abolish Death Tax this year’ (see Arklay 2000:69–70). The outcome of the election on primary votes was the Liberal Party with 34.4 per cent to the Nationals on 28.1 per cent, with Labor recording 37.5 per cent. With Evans dropping out and a tight preference flow, the Liberals won the seat with a two-party preferred vote of 60.6 per cent to 39.4 per cent. Brown, however, held the seat for less than one year; he died as a sitting member on 12 May 1977, never having faced a general election. There was no by-election for his seat after he died as his seat was abolished in the 1977 redistribution.

The by-election for the seat of Lockyer took place on 16 October 1976—just two months after Chalk had resigned (see Cribb 1980:27–46). Seven candidates stood for election. Again, both Coalition parties ran candidates. The Liberals stood Tony Bourke (another local chemist who was presented in party literature as the ‘son of Chalk’—not the stick of chalk), while the Nationals ran Neville Adermann (the son of Sir Charles Adermann, the former federal Minister for Primary Industry and deputy leader of the Federal Country Party, who had been a mentor to Bjelke-Petersen). Labor, without much hope of winning, also nominated a candidate (S. F. Thomson). The Nationals claimed the seat should be their own, as it was a ‘rock solid National party seat’, while the Liberals spent big to try to hold the seat, admitting it was both an expensive and difficult fight. Labor finished a poor third, with 23 per cent of the vote to the Liberals on 40.6 per cent, with the Nationals finishing second on 30 per cent. After preferences were distributed, the Liberals held the seat comfortably by 66.2 per cent to 33.8 per cent. The Nationals were, however, breathing down their necks. Bourke would hold the seat for only one-and-a-half parliamentary terms before being beaten by Tony FitzGerald from the National Party in 1980.

Resolution 210: a unilateral declaration of war

During the Lockyer by-election campaign, the Liberal Party held its annual convention at Toowoomba in early October 1976. The new party leader, Bill Knox, was a key speaker anxious to preach the gospel of conciliation and restore calm. The ultra-Liberals, however—consisting of far more strident local branch delegates—moved Resolution 210, which was ultimately passed by the party’s decision-making body. The resolution greatly widened the ambit for three-cornered contests and formally transferred the initiative for mounting such challenges to local branches. The resolution said, in part, that the state executive of the party would call nominations for *any* seat in the Parliament not currently held by the Liberal Party, providing that

- the local area executive requested it
- the local organisation or branches had the ability to mount a campaign
- there was a reasonable likelihood the local bodies would be able to fund such a campaign
- there was a reasonable prospect of being able to receive nominations from a good local candidate (see Cribb 1980:33).

This was a formal declaration of war against the Nationals. The Liberal rank and file was threatening to mount campaigns against sitting National members wherever the local branch Liberals could conceivably mount a credible campaign. Knox, like Chalk before him, was an ardent coalitionist, who spoke

against the resolution to much booing and jeering from the delegates (Cribb 1980). He had already angered the ultra-Liberals in the party with his statement out of the blue that he was keen to see the complete amalgamation of the two parties. In a very public slap in the face to the new leader, Resolution 210 was passed and Knox suffered a humiliating defeat in his first battle as leader.

He would soon lose his second battle, which would eventually cost him his leadership of the party after a little more than two years in the job (but he later served a second term as leader in the 1980s after the breakdown of the Coalition). Installed as the new Liberal leader, Knox unilaterally announced that under his leadership the Liberals would *not* contest any National-held seats at the 1977 election (then amounting to some 39 in total). He was not, however, able to impose his authority successfully over the party rebels and local Liberal branches ran candidates in 11 National-claimed seats in 1977. In Knox's brief time at the helm, he was unable to carry his party with him.

Projects, projects and projects

As the forty-first Parliament settled down to regular business, it dealt with many amendment acts relating to infrastructure and attempted to combine multiple pieces of legislation into consolidated acts. For instance, in relation to electricity supply, the Electricity Bill of 1976 consolidated five acts and provided for the establishment of the huge power station at Gladstone (due to come into operation in 1982). While both sides of the Parliament welcomed the investment in new infrastructure, the issue of subsidies to rural consumers and higher charges for city users was criticised, with Houston claiming rural subsidies should come out of consolidated revenue rather than be passed on in higher prices for city people. Electricity supplies would soon emerge as a major political battlefield for the government, after blackouts and the union's campaign for a 35-hour week. The Parliament also moved to establish the Port of Brisbane Authority in 1976 to provide for a well-developed and self-funding port facility. Not all was plain sailing, however, in funding infrastructure. The Minister for Main Roads, Russ Hinze, informed the House that the government would be forced to seek finance for the Gateway Bridge over the Brisbane River, adding that 'it was nearly impossible to get the people in Canberra to understand Queensland's road requirements'. Hinze had been complaining of insufficient federal funding for transport projects, whereas his federal counterpart felt he was 'playing politics'. It was reported that the federal Transport Minister, Peter Nixon, had declared in exasperation that 'I sometimes think that Mr Hinze's mouth is bigger than his body' (*QPD* 1976:vol. 271, p. 502). Hinze replied in good measure that the only difference between Nixon and the former Whitlam ministers was that 'Peter Nixon smiles when he calls me nasty names' (*QPD* 1976:vol. 271, p. 502).

Economic expansion and Treasurer Knox's three budgets

Despite recessionary economic conditions sweeping much of south-eastern Australia, the Queensland economy remained buoyant, especially because of the mining and tourism booms. The growing pains of rapid development, however, increasingly began to impose themselves on the annual state budget, on government services and the necessary provision of basic infrastructure.

In bringing down his first budget in September 1976 (the second of the Parliament), Knox paid tribute to the economic stewardship of Sir Gordon Chalk, saying he regarded the 'ten years during which Sir Gordon occupied the portfolio of Treasurer as ten years of very thoughtful and competent management of State finances'. He added that the state's finances were 'in a very healthy position even if problems currently facing the nation as a whole give us some cause for concern' (*QPD* 1976:vol. 271, p. 778). His first budget confirmed the abolition of succession and gift duties; it did not raise the level of any other state taxes; it promised to maintain services (but not to increase them in any 'significant degree'); it increased funding slightly to non-governmental organisations; and it cut capital spending heavily particularly where funding for projects was predominantly provided by the federal government. The 1976/77 budget projected a small operating deficit of \$565 000 out of a total budget expenditure of \$1,597 million.

Knox's second budget was handed down on 22 September 1977. He was conscious of the looming state election, but also of the threats of high inflation, high unemployment and rising wages. He promised no increases in taxes, charges, fares or freights and gave commitments to further reduce payroll tax. He noted that a zero overall growth policy on public service numbers would be maintained and that any new staff positions would have to be met from transfers of abolished positions elsewhere. He made a modest allocation of \$50 million to assist job creation (going to such items as new police stations, government housing for railway staff, septic tanks for schools, road repairs and irrigation works). According to the Treasurer, the \$1.806 million budget was a prudent document and 'a consolidatory budget' that would 'ensure that the high standards developed over [the] years are maintained and consolidated' (*QPD* 1977:vol. 273, p. 879). He projected a small surplus. Meanwhile, the opposition accused Knox of 'self-delusion' and of committing 'economic deception and inconsistency', claiming the budget pretended economic projections were favourable when in fact they were worsening by the day. Tom Burns thought that the government had a hidden draft plan to increase taxes after the next election (*QPD* 1977:vol. 273, pp. 902–3).

Knox's third and final budget was brought down on 21 September 1978, a few weeks before he was ousted as leader. With the economy still fragile, Knox told the Parliament that, from a total budget of \$1,920 million, in excess of \$127 million had been diverted from consolidated revenue to supplement the state's capital program—going mainly on schools, hospitals, railways and urban transport (*QPD* 1978:vol. 275, p. 1880). The 1978/79 budget committed a special capital allocation of \$30 million, with anticipations that it would generate 5000 new jobs. Knox said the budget would provide some scope to improve services across a wide range of government responsibilities (public hospitals, police numbers, funding for children's homes, non-government schools, community kindergartens, school travel schemes, teacher bursaries, remote area scholarships, free milk for schools, meals on wheels and assistance to the good neighbour scheme). He again promised no increases in taxes or charges while declaring the budget 'confers benefits where they are warranted and restraints where they are practicable' (*QPD* 1978:vol. 275, p. 1890). Labor again attacked the budget (after complaining about the government's move to restrict budget reply speeches to 30 minutes), arguing that unemployment was unacceptably high and that the cost of living was outstripping wage rises. The opposition laid most blame for this on the federal Coalition government but accused the state government of winding back the special capital works program—and thus reducing the creation of jobs. In his response to the budget, however, fellow Liberal Don Lane applauded Knox for producing a 'credible effort in the present economic performance' (*QPD* 1978:vol. 276, p. 2173).

In one of the 'crucial reforms' of the period, the Bjelke-Petersen government introduced the Financial Administration and Audit Bill 1977 (with the first reading originally occurring in 1976 while the second reading took place in March 1977). This bill, which was ahead of its time, replaced the antiquated financial legislation first adopted in 1874 (Hielscher 1979). The draft bill had been widely circulated and praised at a special seminar of more than 400 accountants and auditors. It provided greater accountability between budgetary estimates, financial management and auditing and strengthened the powers of the Auditor-General. The legislation applied to the consolidated public sector (departments, statutory authorities and other accounts held by various commissions and boards). It also adopted the 'financial officer' model whereby senior executives (directors-general or chief financial officers) were legally accountable for financial propriety for all funds under their control. While the Premier was able to state that the bill had been thoroughly researched before it was presented to the House (and perhaps was implying that other bills were not so well researched!), Hewitt described the bill as a 'trail-blazer in Australian politics' because 'no other State at present is prepared to introduce a consolidated Bill dealing with both financial administration and audit procedures' (*QPD* 1977:vol. 272, pp. 2337, 2343). Not everyone on the government side was, however, so effusive. Dr

Norman Scott-Young objected strongly to certain amendments (relating to the expenses of parliamentarians) because he felt that such provisions transferred financial control of members' financial affairs from the Parliament to the Premier's Department.

As Treasurer, Knox was also prepared to consider revising the budget format. He mentioned that Queensland could look at moving away from a 'line item' budgeting format to a planning, programming budgeting framework with performance information included. He told the Parliament that 'my feeling is that a programme budget, with a breakdown of expenditure under item or subjective headings, has much to commend it' and proposed to 'ask my Treasury officers to examine the possibility of this new form with a view to more effective work in the financial administration of the State's finances' (*QPD* 1977:vol. 272, p. 2351). It would be more than a decade, however, before the budget was organised and authorised in any program format, consisting of 10 functional policy areas (Ford 1990; Smerdon and Bradley 1992).

Far less progressive in intent was the introduction of legislation (under the *Traffic Act*) effectively banning street marches. The *Traffic Act* was amended in September 1977 with the intention of eliminating demonstrations or protest marches on streets and thoroughfares. Organisers of demonstrations not allowed a permit to march were able to appeal only to the Police Commissioner (and not to a local magistrate). The government argued the legislation was designed to protect the rights of people who wished to travel on the roads so that they could go about their business in an unfettered way. The government claimed—with some hint of duplicity—that the amendments to the *Traffic Act* were not introduced to prevent people from demonstrating. The government claimed:

Nothing in the amending Act is intended to take away the right of people, no matter how small their number, from congregating or gathering to express dissent on any issue whatsoever...[providing they had a permit to do so, of course, from the District Superintendent of Traffic], but the community looks to the Government to ensure that in expressing such dissent nothing should occur to affect the rights of other people to travel on the streets. (*Record of Legislative Acts* 1977, p. 11)

The traffic amendments were rushed through the Parliament in one day, after *Standing Orders* were suspended to allow for the three readings of the bill to be heard in sequence.

The street marches legislation arguably had the opposite effect to that intended. It became a *cause celebre* and an incentive to demonstrate against such restrictions on civil liberties. Students and unionists, in particular, were keen to take to the streets protesting about the police state and increasingly repressive

nature of the government's policies. The marches ban became the subject of not only dissent, but ridicule. The cartoonist Patrick Cook penned a famous cartoon depicting three people in every Australian state. Cook suggested three New South Welshpeople were 'a queue', three Victorians 'a consortium', three South Australians were 'a modern marriage', three West Australians were 'a departing delegation', three Tasmanians were all 'related' and three Queenslanders were 'illegal' (*Australian Financial Review*, 27 April 1978).

The 1977 election: rising dissention amid the scent of victory

Because the government had gone to the polls early in 1974 to maximise its electoral chances, there was speculation that Bjelke-Petersen would again call an early poll, perhaps by May 1977 (some eight months ahead of schedule). The *Courier-Mail* (3 September 1976) ventured not so presciently 'the general election campaign might be the Premier's last. He is tipped to retire during the next term.' Predicting the Premier's pending retirement date was fast becoming a perennial media fascination. Bjelke-Petersen was at the time actively engaged in touring the state opening trade fairs, holding country cabinet meetings, visiting local towns and 'farmfest' events and even 'opening' weirs by naming them after his senior ministers. He spent far less time in the Parliament—which sat for just 38 days in 1977—leading Tom Burns to assert that Queensland had been governed by the 'tyranny of the Cabinet'. Burns was incensed because he felt that '[f]or the past six months the Gang of Eighteen sitting on the benches opposite have made all the decisions, and made them in secret...The Gang of Eighteen have made all the decisions on matters that demanded an expression and a vote in this Parliament' (*QPD* 1978:vol. 274, p. 3).

Despite (or perhaps because of) their huge electoral success in 1974, there had been an increased festering of tension between the Coalition partners during the preceding Parliament. Despite Knox's intentions when he first became leader, this escalated when the Liberal Party controversially announced it would go head-to-head with the National Party in selected electoral contests. Slowly, the goodwill that had been built up by Nicklin, Hiley and Chalk was eroded by a new generation of more strident Liberals—and Bjelke-Petersen was not deterred from fighting back.

The 1977 election was complicated for the Coalition because of a contentious electoral redistribution of metropolitan seats that significantly affected four Liberal-held seats (namely, Barooka, Belmont, Clayfield and Brisbane), effectively eliminating the first three of them. The redistribution resulted in the merging of a series of inner-city electorates and the creation of an equivalent number

of new seats largely on the expanding urban fringes but now open to National Party challenges. The Nationals took the opportunity not only to mount challenges in these urban fringe areas, but to retaliate against the Liberals by declaring that ‘sitting members’ (who supposedly were not to be challenged by joint-party agreement) were recognised only if they were standing again for the same seat that also bore the same name as previously. In other words, some Liberal members sitting in the Assembly were not regarded as ‘sitting members’ because their seats had been redrawn and had undergone a change of name. Some Liberals also found it necessary to jump seats. For example, Bill Hewitt was forced to switch from his seat of Chatsworth to the neighbouring one of Greenslopes (following the majority of his electors, who had been incorporated into the eastern inner-city seat). The sitting Liberal member and Minister for Transport, Keith Hooper, chose to retire in August 1977 rather than recontest the seat, but the Nationals were then able to argue Hewitt was not a sitting member in his original seat so were able to contest the seat.

When the election was held on 12 November, there were 24 three-cornered contests; sitting Coalition members in the previous Parliament held 14 of these seats. Nine sitting Nationals were challenged by Liberals and two further National-claimed seats also faced a Liberal challenger. In retaliation, the Nationals instigated three-cornered contests in three Liberal-held seats (Greenslopes, Mount Gravatt and Wavell). Local decisions to run three-cornered contests meant that preferences now became more important in this election than they had been previously. While preferences were counted in 23 seats in total, they changed the end result in only two seats—Southport and Surfers Paradise—where in both cases National Party candidates finished ahead on the primary vote but were defeated by Liberal challengers on ALP preferences. In Surfers Paradise, the sitting National Party member, Bruce Small, was defeated by Bruce Bishop, while in the new seat of Southport Peter White beat the National candidate. In both cases, these Liberals survived only one term in the Parliament.

According to Vaughan (1980:247), the 1977 state election had a ‘significant impact’ on all three parties in Queensland. He argued that ‘in a sense, all three major parties were losers in 1977’. The ALP’s support increased slightly with only a small number of its voting ‘defectors’ returning back to the party. The party’s vote of 42.83 per cent was up from 36.03 per cent in 1974 but was also its lowest result—apart from 1974—since 1960. It won 12 additional seats so that it now held 23 seats in the new Assembly, but only took back its traditional territory. The Nationals lost four seats (down to 35) and the Liberals lost six (down to 24). The most notable feature of the election was that for the first time since 1941 the National Party outpolled the Liberal Party by 27.15 per cent

to 25.22 per cent. The Coalition tensions created by this result should have provided a much-needed boost to the ALP, but they were unable to capitalise on the discord.

While many of the seats regained by the ALP represented a natural realignment after the debacle of 1974, some victories were particularly noteworthy. The ALP regained Bundaberg from Eugene (Lou) Jensen, who had resigned from the ALP and had held the seat as an independent. Jim Blake, who had earlier held the seat of Isis but lost it in 1974, beat Jensen. Ed Casey (Mackay) rejoined the ALP and retained his seat for the party. The seat of Murrumba, which had been held by the Country/National Party since 1912 but was altered in the 1977 redistribution, was won by the ALP's Raymond (Joe) Kruger. The ALP also claimed a special victory in Townsville South, which had long been held by the idiosyncratic independent Tom Aikens (representing his so-called NQLP). Aikens, then aged seventy-seven, had spent 33 years in State Parliament, initially serving also as the Deputy Mayor of Townsville (1944–49). He was the last of the genuine independents to hold a seat until Liz Cunningham won Gladstone in 1995.

After the election, Bjelke-Petersen announced the composition of his fifth ministry—again retaining 18 ministers, split 10–eight between the Coalition parties.

- Premier: Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, NP
- Deputy Premier and Treasurer: William Knox, Lib.
- Minister for Mines, Energy and Police: Ronald Camm, NP
- Minister for Labour Relations: Fred Campbell, Lib.
- Minister for Health: Dr Llew Edwards, Lib.
- Minister for Primary Industries: Vic Sullivan, NP
- Minister for Maritime Services and Tourism: Max Hodges, NP
- Minister for Lands, Forestry and Water Resources: Neville Hewitt, NP
- Minister for Local Government and Main Roads: Russ Hinze, NP
- Minister for Culture, National Parks and Recreation and Leader of the House: Tom Newbery, NP
- Minister for Transport: Ken Tomkins, NP
- Minister for Education: Val Bird, NP
- Minister for Industry and Administrative Services: Norman Lee, Lib.
- Minister for Works and Housing: Claude Wharton, NP
- Minister for Justice and Attorney-General: Bill Lickiss, Lib.
- Minister for Survey and Valuation: John Greenwood, Lib.

- Minister for Aboriginal and Island Affairs: Charles Porter, Lib.
- Minister for Welfare: John Herbert, Lib.

Subsequent changes in the ministry occurred in August 1979 when Max Hooper (NP, Townsville West) was promoted to replace Max Hodges as Minister for Maritime Services and Tourism (although Hooper's own tenure would be short-lived, as he lost his seat in the 1980 election). Hodges own departure was sweetened with a plum board appointment.

Eccentrics one and all

The forty-second Parliament first sat on 28 March 1978. In a rare show of bipartisanship, Labor supported the government's nominee, Jim Houghton, who was elected Speaker without contest. The Opposition Leader, Tom Burns, explained:

We all know that the coalition parties have agreed that the National Party should nominate the Speaker and that the Liberal Party should nominate the chairman of Committees...During the last Parliament Mr Houghton showed that he was fair and reasonable, so we have no objection to his appointment as Speaker. (*QPD* 1978:vol. 274, p. 3)

This spirit of goodwill, however, soon evaporated. Burns returned to the theme of the government riding roughshod over the Parliament and then raised other controversial issues such as the Tarong power station deal and the Iwasaki resort project (*QPD* 1978:vol. 274, pp. 3–4). In questions without notice, Burns asked the Deputy Premier and Treasurer, Bill Knox:

As the Premier obviously means to supply no information to this Parliament on this highly suspicious decision, and as this strikes at the very heart of the principle of Cabinet being responsible to Parliament and also conflicts with his reported Press statement that the matter will be debated in Parliament, I ask the Deputy Premier and Treasurer: Does he support this cloak of secrecy at a time when there are undenied reports that the choice of Tarong will cost Queenslanders an additional \$259,000,000?

Mr Knox: The Leader of the Opposition already has had opportunities to debate the Tarong question in this House but has not done so...Let me give honourable members an assurance that while we have differences of opinion and different views in Cabinet, we stand together with our traditional principles of collective responsibilities. (*QPD* 1978:vol. 274, p. 322)

The siting of a new coal-fired power station at Tarong, in the Premier's electorate, caused such a furore that Bjelke-Petersen took the unprecedented step of breaking cabinet confidentiality to detail the discussions cabinet had had, including the support given to the project by Knox:

As Premier, it is my duty to support the collective decision of Cabinet. However, I must now break a long-standing rule and outline the facts involved in a Cabinet decision. At the end of the Cabinet meeting on February 13 this year, the following statement by the Treasurer was recorded in the minutes: 'That regarding the establishment of a power station at Tarong, it would be incorrect for anyone to say the decision in favour of the Tarong site would mean an increase in electricity tariffs greater than there would have been had Millmerran been chosen' ... That is the Treasurer's statement as recorded in the minutes of Cabinet. (*QPD* 1978:vol. 274, pp. 362–5)

After Burns unsuccessfully attempted to have the Premier table the document, Bjelke-Petersen alleged that the State Electricity Commission (SEC) had done an about-face on the deal:

Mr Burns: Are you saying that the SEC is crook?

Mr Bjelke-Petersen: The Leader of the Opposition may draw his own conclusions. I am not saying that at all. In fact, the SEC loaded \$22,000,000 against Tarong, but only \$3,400,000 against Millmerran for capital charges for water costs.

[The Premier continued, noting]...all the facts I have been quoting come from official departmental reports and officers—not from unnamed 'senior officials' who keep turning up in the Opposition Leader's and newspaper stories.

Mr Burns: Table the reports. I challenge you to table the reports.

Mr Bjelke-Petersen: It hurts the honourable gentleman so much that he does not want to listen.

Mr Burns interjected.

Mr Bjelke-Petersen: I am afraid that the honourable gentleman will just have to grin and bear it. (*QPD* 1978:vol. 274, p. 364)

During this session, other Liberal ministers also sought to differentiate themselves from the Premier. In April 1978, the Health Minister, Llew Edwards, was moved to issue a Ministerial Statement to disassociate himself and the government from the Premier over Bjelke-Petersen's controversial support of a self-styled

cancer therapist, Milan Brych. The Cook Islands doctor, who had been struck off in New Zealand, had advocated a unique form of cancer treatment based on apricots, which had caught the Premier's attention. When the Premier invited Brych to come to Queensland to establish a cancer clinic, the Health Minister stepped in to expose the hoax. Edwards told the Parliament:

The Premier, in his capacity as a private citizen...invited Milan Brych to Queensland. The Queensland Government, as far as I am aware, and certainly my own department, have not been involved in any arrangements...[a] meeting was set for 4.00 pm in the Premier's Department...The meeting was a great disappointment. All therapeutic and diagnostic procedures, drugs and reagents mentioned by Milan Brych, sometimes extremely vaguely, are known and have been known by Queensland doctors for a long time...Brych refused to discuss even simple scientific and technical details and procedures, and he continued to make contradictory statements about the results of his work in New Zealand. (*QPD* 1978:vol. 274, pp. 55–7)

Edwards then listed a series of significant factors that exposed Brych's fabrication. According to Lunn (1984:280), Edwards out-maneuvred the Premier, which did his own leadership ambitions no harm. The opposition, however, remained unconvinced and attacked the 'Premier's reliance on eccentric advisers' (citing Wiley Francher, Lang Hancock, Charlie Porter, Prince Leonard of Hutt, Rona Joyner, Yohachiro Iwasaki and Milan Brych). Casey suggested:

[Bjelke-Petersen] had made arrangements with Brych not as a private citizen, as alleged, but as Premier of the State. He made a commitment a month ago to fly Brych to Queensland in the Government aircraft to be interviewed here, if necessary. That was a commitment that could be made only by a Premier, and certainly not a private citizen...

The Premier is going ahead in the manner of a person who is either in complete control of all who surround him or who is of unsound mind. This latter suggestion about the Premier is on the lips of many Queenslanders today, including prominent members of the National Party in this House. (*QPD* 1978:vol. 274, p. 166)

Casey called such eccentric advisers 'witch-doctors' and 'the Premier's con men, ratbags and shylocks' (*QPD* 1978:vol. 274, p. 167).

The new session was also marred with further controversy between the federal and state governments. In April, it was announced the Federal Government planned to acquire Queensland Aboriginal reserve lands in an attempt to stop the state government taking over the Aurukun and Mornington Island Aboriginal communities. Although both governments were of similar political

persuasion, Bjelke-Petersen responded to the announcement by saying '[t]hey'll need the army' if they went ahead with the plan (*Courier-Mail*, 6 April 1978). Even his own supporters, however, began to question the Premier's judgments. One senior National Party member was quoted as saying the Premier must have been 'very tired. We think he needs a rest', but added the party 'would stick by the Premier' (*Courier-Mail*, 6 April 1978). The next weekend, at the party's central council meeting, National Party President, Sir Robert Sparkes, repudiated such suggestions, claiming 'Joh is quite efficient, alert and on the job—in no more need of a holiday than even I am' (*Sunday Mail*, 9 April 1978).

Newspapers continued to highlight the internecine conflicts occurring within the government (*Courier-Mail*, 5 April 1978). Reporters also reproached the government for decisions taken in the parliamentary recess including the unilateral decision by the Premier to ban two educational programs: the Social Education Materials Project (SEMP) and Man—A Course of Study (MACOS). The Premier banned these programs from being taught in Queensland schools after complaints from conservative sections of the community that these programs advocated 'secular humanism' (Reynolds 2003:339). It was this controversy that contributed to the establishment of a Parliamentary Select Committee on Education in April 1978, chaired by Mike Ahern.

The Member for Landsborough was regarded as one of the National Party's stars, but was distrusted by the Premier and, despite having served a decade in the Parliament, he remained on the backbench. Ahern performed credibly as chair of the select committee—only the fourth such committee to be appointed in more than 10 years—investigating issues and reviewing educational standards more seriously. The committee met for 21 months, published six *Interim Reports* and made 25 final recommendations (Reynolds 2003:340).

The opposition, however, continued to labour the theme that the government was neglecting the Parliament. Casey noted that in 1977 the number of sitting days (38) had reached an all-time low (*QPD* 1978:vol. 275, p. 9). Later in the year, the Parliament recorded its longest sitting day, not breaking until 6.30 am on 17 May. The legislation considered in the mammoth sitting day included the *Legislative Assembly Act* and another act, the Local Government (Aboriginal Lands Bill) and the Queensland International Tourist Centre Bill. All were controversial. The *Courier-Mail's* (18 May 1978) editorial detailed the folly:

State Parliament goes from one foolishness to another, seemingly determined to appear the craziest legislature in the land. The nineteen-and-one-half hour sitting which ended at 6.35 am yesterday was quite unnecessary and dangerous. Parliament passed too much important legislation too quickly and, for the most part too late an hour for many Members or the public to understand what was done. The practical

effect amounted to legislation in camera, which perhaps was exactly what the Government wanted. It was at last year's longest all-nighter in April that parliament passed, just before midnight, amendments to the Constitution and the Legislative Assembly Act without knowing what it was doing and put at least two members out of Parliament. Now at another marathon sitting it has legislated to put them back. The Iwasaki resort bill was debated between 12.25 am and 6.35 am...Altogether three major bills, all of them controversial, were passed in the course of the sitting which was a night of legislative disgrace.

The other big issue became the abuse of parliamentary perks. In a matter-of-public-interest debate, Kev Hooper accused the Premier of spreading stories that Members of Parliament were cashing in their air-travel vouchers. Hooper asserted that, while the Premier jettied around the state in his own government jet (which Hooper called 'Peanut One'), he had alleged that members were abusing their entitlements—possibly as a way of diverting attention away from his own shortcomings. The Premier had thrown a shadow of suspicion over the members, Hooper argued, and had given the impression that parliamentarians were interested only in the lurks and perks of office. Hooper found this populist attack offensive, claiming 'it would be impossible to find a more experienced hypocrite than our Premier'. He continued:

For the past two weeks the Premier has invited the public to imagine that a few reasonable and overdue parliamentary reforms will turn this chamber into a gigantic travel bureau, with members and their wives jet-setting backwards and forward to the flesh-pots of the world. No member here or in any other State has ever dug his fingers deeper into the public purse than the Premier. He is a past master in perks. (*QPD* 1978:vol. 275, p. 1319)

Hooper's bluster was a case of outrage designed to hide the facts. The Auditor-General, Jim Peel, had been called in to investigate reports (contained largely in the press) that members had not been observing due probity in their travel claims. Peel's report caused an immediate public outcry. He found that up to 23 members had improperly used their air-travel vouchers, swapping domestic entitlements for overseas trips, taking family members on trips, claiming expenses that had not been authorised or incurred and cashing in unused air warrants. Those accused included the Opposition Leader, Ed Casey. The members found to have taken unauthorised travel were expected to repay the amount they owed to the Treasury, but it is not clear whether any did. In desperation, some parliamentarians attempted to discredit the report. In particular, Jim Houghton defended the Parliament's right to determine its own activities. He

claimed that the Auditor-General's report failed to acknowledge the supremacy of the Parliament and as a result he had now referred the report to the Solicitor-General. Houghton stated:

In considering the propriety of the expenditure of funds from the appropriations for the legislative Assembly, the Auditor-General has looked for Cabinet approval of expenditure and has correctly stated that Cabinet decisions are binding on all persons in government, but he has then mistakenly considered the Parliament to be part of the Government. (QPD 1978:vol. 275, p. 1782)

So presumably it was all right to engage in such impropriety? As a result of the Peel report, however, the Premier transferred from the Speaker to his own department responsibility for administering travel and other administrative matters associated with the Parliament. It seemed an almost forlorn gesture that the Queensland Parliament received its first mace in 1978—supposedly the symbol of parliamentary authority! The mace was presented to the Parliament by the 'Government of Queensland' (not by the people of Queensland or even by the British House of Commons).

In the two-month adjournment of parliament (June–August), a succession of electricity blackouts occurred in south-eastern Queensland—caused by industrial disputes in the power industry. This would lead to legislation preventing strikes in the state's essential industries, which, alongside legislation banning street marches, would become leitmotifs of the Bjelke-Petersen government and part of the state's folklore. The Labor opposition, not surprisingly, constantly took a strong stand against both these pieces of repressive legislation, arguing that they would repeal the *Essential Services Act* and the street march laws (under the traffic acts). When the increased state powers under the Essential Services Bill were debated, the debate ran for 14 hours (ending after 4 am) and required 70 divisions (QPD 1979:vol. 280, pp. 1301–81)—and this was after a 12-hour debate the previous day.

Sherwood by-election and the sudden end of Tom Burns' leadership

A year after the state election, a by-election was required in Sherwood after the Minister for Welfare, John Herbert, resigned on health grounds in September 1978, and died shortly afterwards. The by-election held on 25 November 1978 was contested by eight candidates—including the Liberals' J. Angus Innes, Labor's M. Kinnane and the Nationals' D. Draydon (an ex-Liberal lawyer and film censor), as well as candidates from the new Australian Democrats, the Progress Party, the Communist Party, the National Front and one independent. The Nationals did not expect to win the seat, according to the newspapers of the day, but they did 'expect a barometer of the Premier's and thus the party's popularity one year after the State Election' (*National Times*, 11 November 1978). As Hamill (1980:256) stated, 'it was evident that the Nationals saw Sherwood as an opportunity to gauge Bjelke-Petersen's popularity in the metropolitan area'. To test the waters, the Premier made regular appearances in the electorate despite the Nationals not having nominated a high-profile candidate. There were, however, also rumours circulating that Joh had 'lost the support of his own backbench' due to his 'despotic rule'. He was accused of 'earning the enmity of most Liberal members for his rough treatment of them in the party room' and alienating 'a substantial segment of the public by his obstinacy over the [street] march ban' (*National Times*, 11 November 1978). Other Nationals believed that the Premier's strongman image would go down well with voters. The by-election was seen largely as a test of the popularity of Bjelke-Petersen's divisive leadership—an indication of whether his excesses needed to be curbed (by the triumvirate of Sparkes, Evans and Callaghan) or whether he would become more adamant and belligerent.

With such a field of candidates, it was not surprising the primary vote of the two main parties declined. The Liberals suffered a swing of more than 16 per cent in their primary vote (down to 42.2 per cent), while Labor's vote dropped by 3.2 per cent to 32 per cent. The Nationals managed to poll just 10.3 per cent—a poor showing after all their efforts and well down from Mike Evans' showing in Clayfield. After the distribution of preferences, the Liberals' Angus Innes won the seat with 60.5 per cent to Labor's 39.5 per cent—a slight swing to the ALP of just 2.4 per cent (Hamill 1980). Hugh Lunn, writing in *The Australian* (27 November 1978), described the by-election result as 'the day Bjelke's march was halted'.

Labor's poor showing at the by-election had immediate impact: it led to the sudden resignation of the Opposition Leader, Tom Burns. Burns had held the post for almost four years, inheriting the job after Percy Tucker's spectacular loss in the 1974 election (losing his own seat in the process). Burns had been

attempting to reform the Labor Party internally, seeking to rationalise local branches and give ordinary members a greater voice in party affairs. According to Lunn, however, Burns had put in a 'poor performance' in the by-election and had 'failed to live up to expectations', especially considering the state seat covered much of the same territory as the federal seat of Oxley (held by the Federal Opposition Leader, Bill Hayden). The poll result showed 'just how much disarray the Queensland ALP is in' (*The Australian*, 27 November 1978). Although the local media speculated that a keen contest for the post would eventuate (between Keith Wright, Ed Casey and Kev Hooper), in the end only Casey was nominated and elected unopposed, with Jack Houston remaining his deputy. Casey was the second Labor leader in recent years to represent a northern Queensland seat and he had just two years to make a mark before the next election was due, in late 1980. Not everyone was a fan of Casey: he had not impressed Gough Whitlam, who called him a 'troglodyte', and he antagonised many women's groups with his strident anti-abortion stance (Charlton 1983:128). Houston's second stint as deputy would not last long (15 months), as he would shortly after indicate he wanted to retire from the Parliament. The old patriarch was replaced by former teacher Bill D'Arcy (Woodridge) in early 1980, shortly before the next state election. D'Arcy's unanimous election was received coolly outside the party, with one commentator saying his 'two periods as an MLA totalled only five years and his public image to date is unlikely to excite the electorate at large' (*AJPH* 1980:vol. 26, no. 3).

Knighthoods for favours—and the Bjelke-Petersen Foundation

The conservative government had long favoured the awarding of knighthoods to its own senior members of the government. Previous stalwarts of the government had received knighthoods, such as Frank Nicklin, Tom Hiley, Ken Morris, Alan Munro and Gordon Chalk. Two National Party Speakers were also knighted: Alan Fletcher and David Nicholson. Under Bjelke-Petersen, the tradition continued but was accelerated. Former ministers Harry Richter, John Row, Doug Tooth and Wally Rae were all rewarded with the 'gong', while Bruce Small was knighted for his services to local government. Two Liberal leaders were knighted: Bill Knox in 1979, followed by Llew Edwards in 1984, after he had left the government. Then, perhaps impatient of waiting or apprehensive his successors would never get around to it, the Premier also put his hand up for a knighthood in June 1984—supposedly for 'services to parliamentary democracy'! Inauspiciously, he dropped the medal when showing it to the media after the Queen in London had presented him with it.

By the 1970s, however, the government's practice of awarding knighthoods to its members took on a new dimension. A string of 'National Knights' was appointed from local successful businessmen close to the Premier, and often with close associations with the National Party itself (senior officials, fundraisers, trustees). These included Sir Robert Sparkes, Sir Edward Lyons (nicknamed 'top-level Ted'), Sir Charles Holm, Sir William Allen, Sir Roderick Procter, Sir Ernest Savage, Sir Frank Moore and Sir Doug Logan. These National Party 'mates' were reputed to wield considerable influence behind the scenes in the government and many held high-paid executive posts on the government's payroll—often without declaring or sensing any conflict of interest.

Another way sycophantic business leaders could purchase knighthoods was to make significant donations to the National Party through its fundraising arm. Bjelke-Petersen had announced in 1979 that he required some \$2.5 million to fight the upcoming election (due by the end of 1980 but with a possibility that it would be called earlier to take advantage of Labor's disunity). He established the Bjelke-Petersen Foundation, a high-profile party fund, to raise money for the party and to assist with election campaigning. He appealed directly to private enterprise to support it, saying: 'We hope that private enterprise will back up and give us the power, in turn, to help them to further their private enterprise endeavours in the State' (*The Australian*, 19 February 1979). He then began approaching business leaders for substantial donations—often with the prospect of a knighthood in the wings.

One celebrated case involved a NSW businessman, Justin Hickey, who purchased a knighthood for \$100 000. When questioned on television as to how he came to be knighted by the Queensland government, he said he had made the large donation to support a hospice in Bjelke-Petersen's electorate. When the journalist Peter Ross asked him whether he had made the payment *before* or *after* the knighthood was announced, he replied candidly: 'Oh no I paid the \$100,000 before I ever received the knighthood' (see Coaldrake 1989:141–2). When asked in the Parliament how much Hickey or his associates had donated to the Bjelke-Petersen Foundation, the Premier refused to answer, claiming tangentially that the Opposition Leader had outstanding debts. Others who exploited the system were perhaps not so forthright (and opposition members even claimed that 'Sir' Frank Luton, of the notorious Russell Island land scandal and facing trial for fraud, had paid \$25 000 for a bogus knighthood in the 1980s). With hindsight, such abuses of state-nominated honours merely helped discredit the imperial honours system; and interestingly, Bjelke-Petersen was the last member of the government to be awarded a knighthood.

Former National Party MP for Callide, Lindsay Hartwig, later alleged that National Party parliamentarians were expected to donate \$10 000 to the Bjelke-Petersen Foundation if they wanted to be considered for promotion to the

ministry. He claimed that he personally had been asked to cough up \$10 000 for the trust fund—an allegation the Labor opposition was keen to repeat (*QPD* 1981:vol. 283, p. 577).

The vandalism of the Bellevue Hotel in 1979

During the 1970s, the destruction of heritage buildings became a major political issue. In the Brisbane CBD, in particular, a swath of demolitions took place to clear away older properties and use the land for the development of high-rise apartments, new commercial buildings and some government offices. Although the preservation of heritage buildings became a political issue and the subject of demonstrations and popular campaigns, the state government did anything but preserve the city's heritage, and it was only when most of the older buildings were gone that the community woke up to what had happened.

The historic Bellevue Hotel, located on Alice Street opposite Parliament House, had long been a drinking hole and meeting place for parliamentarians and journalists. The government had leased it in part to provide overnight accommodation for up to 25 country members. It had, however, been allowed to fall into disrepair and was rotting and structurally unsafe. Rather than restore the old pub, the state government decided to demolish it as part of a redevelopment of the parliamentary precinct, with the Premier referring to it as 'just a heap of rubble', which it soon was. The Bellevue was clandestinely demolished late on the evening of Friday 20 April 1979 by an infamous firm of new-migrant demolishers, the Deen Brothers (who labelled what they did 'reverse-construction'). When word spread that the building was being bulldozed and smashed that evening, crowds of people turned up to protest against the demolition, including some parliamentarians (including from the government side). The hotel was ringed by barbed wire and a police cordon, with Special Branch officers in the crowd. When the Deen Brothers arrived with bulldozers, they smashed their way through the crowd and barbed wire. The police dealt with the demonstration by resorting to rough-house tactics, hitting demonstrators, physically apprehending them and removing them. The circumstances of the demolition led to the Bellevue becoming a *cause celebre* in both the Parliament and the wider community, which heightened popular awareness of heritage conservation.² Interestingly, two dissident Liberals, Terry Gygar and Rosemary Kyburz, moved a censure motion against the way the demolition was undertaken (the clandestine method and the incidents that took

² Later, in one of those little ironies of life, the Strangers Bar in Parliament House was for a period renamed the Bellevue Bar to commemorate the old land and serve as a reminder of the vandalism of the era.

place, not the decision to demolish it). The unusual censure debate became a lengthy business, running to some 64 pages in *Hansard*. Eventually their motion was defeated—30 votes in favour, but 41 against. Eight Liberals felt strongly enough to support the censure motion: Akers, Gygar, Hewitt, Innes, Kyburz, Lane, Scott-Young and (Peter) White (*QPD* 1979:vol. 277, pp. 4168–232).

The destruction was, however, not over. The Bellevue was followed by the demolition of the Hoffnung Building in the early 1980s, an act some members declared was worse than the destruction of the Bellevue and certainly attracted its own commentary and allegations. The Hoffnung Building was a state government building knocked down so the site could be redeveloped, although some government ministers tried to lay the blame for the demolition on the Labor-controlled Brisbane City Council, which they claimed had approved the demolition. The Cloudland Dancehall in Bowen Hills, near Breakfast Creek, was also demolished in 1982 to make way for an apartment complex. Each of these cases led to outrage, yet the public was not given the opportunity to object or to suggest alternatives.

Restoration of Parliament House—the infrastructure not the institution

The parliamentary buildings had not changed greatly since the second wing was completed in 1891, although the internal usage of the physical space and grounds had changed considerably over the century. During the period 1978–82, a major bout of new construction and refurbishment was undertaken. A 24-storey Parliamentary Annexe tower was completed and opened in March 1979. It contained an additional chamber, library facilities, committee rooms, member rooms and sleeping facilities, a pool, sauna and sporting facilities. It was unkindly dubbed the ‘Taj Mahal’ by the local media and by a few disbelieving politicians. Suddenly, the Queensland Parliament went from being the smallest and most cramped legislature in the Australian states to being one of the largest and most spacious.

The older historic buildings were preserved and connected to the Annexe, but the two older wings including the Assembly and old council chambers were closed for restoration in 1980 due to an infestation of West Indian termites. The entire building was covered with massive tarpaulins and fumigated, after which much of the interior woodwork was restored or replaced. In the meantime, the Assembly met in the new ‘third chamber’ located on the fifth floor of the annexe (meeting there until 1982 when the restorations were completed). Work on the Chamber and associated rooms was completed by January 1982 and the remainder of the upgrade was finished by June 1982. Two additional lifts

were installed. The restoration greatly improved the physical attributes of the buildings that had long been the subject of much complaint. It did not do much to improve the institution of the Parliament itself, which was criticised (like the old building) as displaying ‘institutional rot’ (Coaldrake 1989).

Gympie and Redcliffe by-elections, and a new Speaker

Two further by-elections were required in 1979—both held on 1 September. The Speaker, Jim Houghton, resigned from his parliamentary position in early July due to ill health and formally resigned his seat of Redcliffe in August. He held a press conference to announce his intention to quit on 4 July at which he said the standards of behaviour in the Assembly had fallen to those of a ‘cess-pit’ (*AJPH* 1980:vol. 26, no. 1, p. 106). The Minister for Tourism and Marine Services, Max Hodges, also resigned, from his seat of Gympie, on the same day (8 August). He had resigned from the ministry on the last day of July 1979 and was one of the last Country Party members to have served continuously since the Coalition came to office in 1957 (the other two being Bjelke-Petersen and Nev Hewitt). Hodges was appointed chairman of the Port of Brisbane Authority on his resignation from the Parliament.

The Nationals’ state secretary, Mike Evans, talked down the prospect of the Nationals retaining Redcliffe even though the party stood Houghton’s younger son, John, to maximise the personal vote (sponsored by the professional campaigner, Rona Joyner, a local Nationals branch member in Redcliffe) (see Cribb 1980). Running a strong local campaign (on the theme of restoring the Liberals’ numbers in the Parliament) the Liberal Party took the seat at its fourth attempt to wrest it from the Nationals. A local chemist, Terry White, became the new member, winning the seat on his second attempt. White was a capable and ambitious politician (if sometimes naive), who would make it into the ministry within just more than 15 months of sitting in the Assembly, and would become party leader within four years (see Koch 2010).

In contrast with their result in Redcliffe, the Nationals retained Gympie, with Len Stephan beating his Liberal and Labor opponents but suffering an 11 per cent primary swing against the party (although only 2.52 per cent on a two-party preferred basis). Stephan would hold the seat for more than 21 years without rising to any great heights (becoming government whip for three months and chairing two committees), but he did see off the One Nation challenge in his seat in 1998. The mixed news from these by-elections caused the Premier to jettison any notion of calling an early election in late 1979. The Premier responded to the

poor showing by the Nationals by saying ‘you can’t win everything’ and that he would now not hold a general election until ‘well into next year’ (*Courier-Mail*, 3 September 1979).

With the resignation of Jim Houghton from the Assembly, a new Speaker was elected after much protracted argument and name-calling. As one contemporary commentator recalled: ‘members seemed determined to prove Mr Houghton right. For four hours before a new Speaker was elected, government and opposition members indulged in an “orgy” of uncontrolled behaviour—accusations, insults, invective and constant interjections—while the Clerk of Parliament strove in vain to impose order’ (*AJPH* 1980:vol. 26, no. 1, p. 106). Selwyn Muller (NP, Fassifern) was elected Speaker on 8 August 1979. Muller immediately disgraced himself by claiming that the Speaker’s role in the Parliament was that of ‘applying the wishes of the government he represents’ (see *AJPH* 1980:vol. 26, no. 1; Coaldrake 1989:70)—a totally distorted view of the Speaker’s significance (although he subsequently said he meant to say ‘wishes of the Parliament he represents’). Muller went on to show considerable favouritism towards the government, at times disallowing questions and curtailing the scope of the opposition to probe government administration. Muller did, however, allow some relaxation in *Sessional Orders* that Houghton had agreed be retained (generally allowing more time for debates and speeches on legislation). He also invited all parties to propose amendments to *Standing Orders*—a body of procedural rules that had not been updated for some 30 years!³ Labor, however, and a number of Liberal backbenchers were unhappy about the intention in the *Sessional Orders* to prevent backbenchers from speaking at the first reading stage of a bill (probably suggested because most had never seen the legislation and tended to ad lib on anything that came to mind). Despite a debate lasting about two hours on the proposed changes, the government gagged the debate, defeated Labor’s proposed amendment on party lines and passed the government’s proposed changes, with only one Liberal, Rob Akers, abstaining. Although a division was required, Muller had declared the outcome: ‘the “Ayes” have it’ (*QPD* 1980:vol. 282, p. 129).

The Minister for Culture, National Parks and Recreation, Tom Newbury, resigned from the ministry on 21 August 1979 only a matter of days before the two by-elections were held. He resigned to take up the plum post of Agent-General

3 Tom Burns stated in the Assembly that ‘[w]hen I first entered Parliament back in 1972, Jack Houston said that he would write to the Premier requesting a meeting of the Standing Orders Committee. Since then, every Opposition leader has written. But there has not been a meeting, because the Government does not want a meeting of the Standing Orders Committee.’ He dismissed the Deputy Premier’s suggestion that the estimates of every department should be debated, maintaining ‘we will be lucky if we debate half a dozen department’s Estimates’. He further criticised the Deputy Premier’s idea of having adjournment debates (two five-minute speeches) on Tuesdays at the very end of a sitting day, ‘when all the journalists have gone to bed’ (*QPD* 1980:vol. 282, pp. 122–3). He also said the government and Premier’s Department were worried the opposition was using the Parliamentary Library to become ‘a thorn in their side’.

in London, but hung around in Queensland until after the upcoming state election. During the main campaign, Newbery ran a local rebellion against those he called the 'big-shots' in the National Party, perhaps placing his appointment at risk. It was reported:

The genial Mr Newbery is bucking the party machine and refusing to campaign for his party's endorsed candidate in his old seat of Mirani. The National Party has endorsed Mr Jim Randell as Mr Newbery's successor in the normally blue-ribbon National Party electorate. Newbery is backing independent candidate, John Comerford, his electorate secretary—who was still working for Newbery at the time. (*Sunday Sun*, 19 October 1980)

The demise of Knox and the arrival of the more forceful Dr Edwards

Knox was deposed as leader in a messy coup carried out in two attempts in 1978. He was removed because the Liberals seemed to be going backwards, feared they were too subservient to the Nationals and because Knox seemed to be getting too close to Bjelke-Petersen. Liberal parliamentarians had made criticisms that Knox was not leading the party and that he had shown no leadership over the Peel report into members' travel entitlements. Two no-confidence urgency motions in his leadership proposed to the Liberals' state convention in June were prevented by the ruling of the State President, Yvonne McComb. The issue did not go away, however, and disquiet remained in the party room.

The first coup attempt did not go exactly to plan. On 20 September, a party room spill of his leadership resulted in a tied 11–11 split among the members and Knox used his casting vote to hold onto the leadership position, surviving by one vote. It was a 'show of hands' ballot—that is, everyone saw who voted for whom, and the Liberal ministers were obliged to support Knox. After the party vote, Knox faced a five-hour grilling from his parliamentary colleagues, on 27 September, after which he said, 'I don't think my style is too bad' (*Courier-Mail*, 28 September 1978). Then, in early October, a second special meeting was convened to topple the leader. On the eve of the second coup, Knox was in Sydney attending his mother's funeral, but vowing to fight on. The party room vote the next day deposed Knox and installed Llew Edwards as the new leader (Bill Hewitt was reported as being prepared to stand against Knox if Edwards would not).

Edwards was unsettled over the 'callous' coup and performed badly at his first press conference, evading questions and refusing to say what debts he had

incurred to his party supporters in the party room (Wells 1979:118). Although Edwards had apparently given undertakings to his key supporters that they would become ministers once he was leader, Edwards did not reshuffle his Liberal ministers until after the 1980 election (meaning Lee, Lickiss, Greenwood and Porter survived, while Hewitt, Lane and Austin had to wait). Edwards did, nevertheless, institute a policy of having Liberal ‘shadow ministers’ appointed to ‘make statements and appear as Liberal spokesmen on the portfolios held by National ministers’ (*AJPH* 1980:vol. 26, no. 3, p. 421). These spokespeople also produced separate Liberal policies for each of these portfolios. These provocative moves infuriated the Premier, who found such actions disloyal; he responded by insisting that the Liberals focus on promoting government policies.

Edwards kept being reminded of his callous coup in the Parliament. Casey said, a few months later, ‘his standard is measured, I believe, by the way in which he displaced his former leader whilst that gentleman was away at the funeral of his mother’ (*QPD* 1979:vol. 277, p. 3412). He was also criticised for being frequently absent from question time or for disappearing for periods during questions. The following interchange took place on 27 August 1980:

Mr Casey: The Treasurer has disappeared again. He seems to disappear quite regularly at question time. He did it yesterday.

Mr Sullivan: Stop trying to be smart.

Mr Casey: It is a pity he is not in the House at question time, when he is supposed to be. He disappears with monotonous regularity.

An Opposition Member: He’s at the trots.

Mr Casey: Yes we all know he is in a bind over the trots. I will put the question on notice...

Dr Edwards: I rise to a point of order. I believe the Leader of the Opposition made some comments regarding my absence from the House. I am quite happy to receive a question without notice. The reason I was absent was that I was discussing a matter of great importance to the State regarding the trotting industry with the chairman of the Trotting Board. That was why I was called from the Chamber. (*QPD* 1980:vol. 282, p. 214)

The Speaker then asked whether Casey wanted to ask the question without notice or on notice. When Bill Hewitt objected, Casey said he would ‘shuffle the pack’ of intended questions and proceeded to ask a question to Edwards derived from the *Courier-Mail* a few days earlier on a budget leak! Budget leaks were the flavour of the month over the next few question times as various titbits of information had been leaked from the state budget (allegedly by the Education

Minister, Val Bird), and these evoked parallels with the infamous leaking of the entire federal budget to journalist Laurie Oakes in 1980. Edwards clarified his position the next day with a Ministerial Statement claiming allegations of impropriety against the chief steward of the Trotting Board had been made and that he had been dismissed from employment.

Some senior government ministers, who had served throughout much of the Coalition's period in government, gradually let it be known that they were retiring at the next election. Ron Camm, the Nationals' deputy leader and current Mines Minister, announced his resignation as minister and from his seat of Whitsunday on 17 July 1980. His seat was declared vacant but no by-election was called. Other ministers who decided not to recontest included Fred Campbell, Nev Hewitt and Charles Porter—all of whom received valedictory motions at the conclusion of the session. None of the other retiring ministers caused a further by-election. Camm, who retired on a good superannuation payout (\$320 000), was immediately appointed to an executive government job as Chairman of the Queensland Sugar Board. A string of such appointments led to allegations from Ed Casey that the government was engaged in a 'jobs for the boys' scam, in which 'a generously superannuated political favourite [was] being hustled sideways into an extravagantly rewarded Government job at an age when most Queenslanders are either required to be retired or are on the edge of retirement' (*QPD* 1980:vol. 282, pp. 5–6). The Nationals' one-term Member for Wynnum, the 'unknown' Bill Lamond, was appointed to head the Small Business Development Corporation.

Outrage over ministers taking large superannuation payments and then receiving other government appointments drew attention not only to the 'jobs for the boys' issue but to the generous superannuation payments politicians could expect at taxpayers' expense. Many senior ministers of much younger vintage than the Premier were now retiring with very comfortable pensions, and yet Bjelke-Petersen had refused to join the parliamentary superannuation scheme when it was introduced and had remained outside it. This matter of the 'generous super' payments to long-serving members caused great envy with the Premier and would fester in his mind for years to come. It was alleged by some former members that Bjelke-Petersen tried to gain backdated entry into the superannuation scheme but this was not granted.

On Labor's side, Jack Houston announced his own resignation, dated from 25 July, confirming that he would not be recontesting his seat of Bulimba at the 1980 election. The older brigade was gradually making way for a new generation and perhaps an influx of talent. And the Labor Party was just starting to think of ways to augment its Caucus with a better quality of candidate.

Finishing the last session of the forty-second Parliament, the government passed the *Griffith University Amendment Act 1980*, providing a major overhaul of the original act of 1971. In debate, the Liberal backbencher Bill Hewitt described the new university as ‘a lusty youngster [whose] best and finest hours still lie ahead of it’. He claimed ‘Griffith is one of the great tertiary institutions on the south side of the river’ (there were not that many there in those days), and that he had a ‘particular affinity with it’. To which Kevin Hooper interjected: ‘they tell me that the only time you went through a university was on a pushbike’ (*QPD* 1980:vol. 282, pp. 181–4). Hooper, nevertheless, graciously acknowledged Hewitt’s performance as Chairman of Committees (effectively deputy speaker). Hooper volunteered that he had been

[r]eliably informed that, irrespective of the outcome of the election, the member for Greenslopes will not be seeking re-election as Chairman of Committees. It would be churlish of me if I did not pay tribute to the manner in which he has discharged his duties as Chairman of this Parliament...I believe that the member for Greenslopes has been one of the fairest and most impartial Chairmen to have held that position since I have been in this House. (*QPD* 1980:vol. 282, p. 793)

This was a rare moment of appreciation in a very torrid political atmosphere.

Elsewhere as the session drew to a close the Parliament talked of the virtues of hydrogen cars, the costs of aircraft for government ministers touring the state and making overseas trips, the new government jet (a Beech 200), the possibility of casinos and poker machines in Queensland, extravagant ministerial expenses, donations to the Bjelke-Petersen Foundation in exchange for ‘favourable decisions’ (including claims by federal Liberal minister Eric Robinson), female strippers at sporting club functions behaving like prostitutes, the cancer quack Milan Brych now that he had been struck off the medical register in New Zealand and arrested in California, what to do about explosives, firearms and weapons, and the prospects for the forthcoming Commonwealth Games to be held in Brisbane in 1982. It ended with Casey lamenting the parlous state of the Parliament during a series of valedictory speeches (something the Premier said he had never heard before). Bjelke-Petersen claimed ‘it is the first time in my nearly 34 years in Parliament that a political speech has been made by the Leader of the Opposition during the valedictory...to me, this is completely wrong. This is not what a valedictory is for’ (*QPD* 1980:vol. 282, pp. 819–20). Casey responded with both barrels, saying:

[T]here is no doubt that we have reached the stage where people in the community regard the Parliament and all members with disdain. This has happened because of the way in which Parliament has been conducted. It has even spun off into the media. Pumpkin scones seem

to excite more interest in the media than the first election challenge by a Queenslander [Bill Hayden] for the Prime Ministership in over 60 years. The Cabinet has become the censor of Parliament whereas it should be answerable to it. (*QPD* 1980:vol. 282, p. 819)

The Speaker, Selwyn Muller, said he was ‘most disturbed at the comments of the Leader of the Opposition’, not for their substance but because Casey was daring to break with the conventional protocol. Casey was pulled up by Peter McKechnie for his breach of convention and was ‘severely reprimanded’ by the Speaker (*QPD* 1980:vol. 282, p. 819).

The lead-up to 1980 election: the ‘Coalition’ now but in name alone

The 1980 election would be the last the Nationals and Liberals would contest in a coalition arrangement until 1995. Despite the semblance of unity, both conservative parties ran separate campaigns—for the first time since coming to government in 1957. The Premier maintained he had offered to run a joint campaign and said that Edwards had also wanted one but was overruled, claiming his deputy had said ‘I’d like to stand beside you in the election. But you know that my organisation won’t let me’ (*Truth*, 19 November 1980). The animosities between the governing parties had become intense and for the first time actively involved the leadership on both sides. Moreover, with each of the Coalition parties launching overt public attacks on the other, the feuding boiled over in the campaign and was reflected in the campaign messages of each side. The Premier threatened the Liberals that they would ‘now pay for disassociating themselves from him’ in the past and added that the ALP and the Nationals will be ‘doing all we can to oppose them and reduce their numbers’ (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 September 1980), although he did say he was willing to go back into coalition should the government win the election. It was also reported in October that a ‘new conservative force’ was being mooted among sections of the National Party. A future conservative government could consist, not of a formal coalition combining both parties, but of a National-dominated government with the support of a few ‘scab’ Liberal members who would give it the numbers in the Parliament (perhaps about eight members swapping allegiance). Although Knox claimed he had no ‘rats’ who were considering deserting a sinking ship (*Courier-Mail*, 14 October 1980), the Nationals had hatched a portentous plan, which would come to fruition but not in this Parliament.

The Nationals were particularly incensed because their senate representation had fallen from eight senators in 1975 to just three Australia-wide after the 1980 half-senate election, at which the Liberals had chosen to contest as a separate

entity (a split ticket). Bjelke-Petersen claimed that despite a high combined vote for the Coalition in Queensland (49.77 per cent), the National Party was at its 'weakest strength since proportional representation was introduced 31 years ago' (*The Age*, 8 November 1980).⁴ He blamed the debacle on 'dumped federal Finance Minister, Eric Robinson, State secretary, Stephen Litchfield, president Dr John Herron and failed Liberal Senate candidate Yvonne McComb—the force behind the running of a separate Senate ticket' (*Truth*, 26 June 1980). Bjelke-Petersen had a particular interest in the 1980 federal election as he had secured front spot for his wife, Florence, on the Nationals' senate ticket. He was quoted as stating: 'Any party needs the best-known and best candidate it can get for any election. To me that means Florence is high on the list' (*Truth*, 26 June 1980). In reality, some Nationals had planned to place Joh himself on the senate ticket as the number-one candidate, hoping his personal support would win two positions for the Nationals and at the same time remove him from state politics, allowing Ahern to step up to the Premiership. Joh would then have been able to serve six years as senator (superannuated) and the 'party would never have to face the dreadful thought of dropping its most successful premier if things started to go horribly wrong' in the future (Lunn 1984:300–1). In other words, Flo was the fallback candidate, but still conveying the Premier's name. It must be acknowledged, however, that the 'split-ticket' plan did not really work for the conservatives as they managed to have only two senators elected (Flo Bjelke-Petersen and Neville Bonner). Despite the falling out over the senate split ticket, in the state election, the Nationals still intended to give their preferences to the Liberals in most seats.

The bad blood between the Coalition was further exacerbated by an apparent cooling of relations between the Premier and his Deputy Premier, Llew Edwards. A Morgan Gallup Poll published in August 1979 placed the Liberal leader on a higher approval rating as leader than the Premier. Edwards attracted 45 per cent approval to Bjelke-Petersen's 41 per cent and Ed Casey's 27 per cent. There was also some press speculation in the lead-up to the election that the Premier was engaged in an 'unholy' conspiracy with Labor, softening his attacks on the opposition so that it could take up the fight with the Liberals in the south-eastern corner of the state (the so-called 'sweetheart deal'). In other words, the Nationals and Labor perhaps realised that they had a common political opponent: the city Liberals. It was alleged that Bjelke-Petersen had phoned Casey before the election was called to forewarn him of the announcement (before he told Edwards). Edwards claimed in October that his party was put at a disadvantage

4 The Nationals' representation in the Senate had fallen to just three from the 1980 half-senate election after the 1979 defection of Senator Bernie Kilgariff to the Liberals. The National senators were Doug Scott (NSW) and Stan Collard and Flo Bjelke-Petersen (Qld).

not knowing the precise date of the election and ‘even more so in a coalition government when one partner is kept in the dark’ (*Courier-Mail*, 20 October 1980). He accused the Premier of keeping him guessing.

Labor’s Casey was both optimistic and defiant in the lead-up to the election. His confidence was bolstered after the ALP in Queensland had secured a 5 per cent swing in the 1980 federal election held on 18 October—just 42 days before the state poll (although winning no additional seats). According to one journalist, Casey claimed one month out from the poll that he ‘was convinced...that his party could win office’ (*Melbourne Argus*, 22 October 1980). His optimism was also embellished owing to the fact that relations within the Coalition were clearly far from harmonious. The local media was similarly sanguine about the new Opposition Leader’s chances, with the *Courier-Mail* (7 November 1980) arguing that because Casey held a central Queensland seat, he ‘has a background similar to that of many past Qld Premiers’, [which] meant he might capitalise on anti-government feeling in Central and Nth Qld’.

A total of 271 candidates stood at the 1980 election. This was eight fewer than the record set in 1972 and more than 20 more than had stood in 1974 and 1977. The ALP provided the largest number of contestants (83), fielding candidates in all 82 seats and with two candidates standing in the seat of Caboolture. The Liberal Party ran 66 candidates, 15 more than in 1977, with the increase due to the party fielding more candidates against sitting Nationals. The party ran two Liberal candidates in two seats: Port Curtis and South Coast. The Nationals came third, running 58 candidates in 56 seats (with two standing in Cook and Lockyer). Trying to dislodge the Nationals’ Russ Hinze, the seat of South Coast attracted the largest number of candidates, with eight vying for the spot. A further four seats had six candidates each.

Once again, three-cornered contests were a source of intense interest and rivalry. In 1980, three-cornered contests took place in almost one-quarter of all seats—24 in total, the same as in 1977—although not many were pivotal to the eventual outcome. Again the highly contested areas were the Gold and Sunshine Coasts, a handful of Brisbane seats, some of the rural hinterland seats around Brisbane and a few far northern seats such as Cook, Townsville and Mulgrave. Fourteen Liberals contested seats held by sitting National members. With so many seats being bitterly contested by both conservative parties, a crucial political issue of the day was whether the party leaders would campaign for their candidates in seats held by their coalition partners. The new Liberal leader, Llew Edwards, refused to campaign for the Liberal opponent standing against Russ Hinze in South Coast, despite the Nationals standing a candidate (Roger Hayden) against Edwards in his seat of Ipswich. Other Liberal ministers were divided over whether to campaign for Liberal candidates in Gold Coast seats held by National ministers. When Liberal backbencher Bruce Bishop asked his own ministers

to endorse Liberal candidates in the seats of South Coast and Albert, Edwards responded by saying he would not campaign against any cabinet colleague; in contrast, Bill Knox agreed to do so; Bill Lickiss proclaimed that he would have to consult his leader; and John Greenwood and Norman Lee both said no. Charles Porter expressed the dilemma many senior Liberals felt when he said '[a]lthough I support Liberalism this does not mean that I am prepared to work against a Cabinet colleague' (*Truth*, 25 September 1980).

With so many three-cornered contests, preferences were identified as one of the most important weapons in Labor's artillery—they could decide some seats on the conservative side. In a bid to destabilise the government further, the ALP opted to direct preferences to the National Party in selected seats—some held by the Nationals and some by the Liberals. Tom Burns publicly defended this tactic on ABC television, largely on the grounds that the Liberals were more of a threat to Labor in south-eastern Queensland (*Sunday Sun*, 26 October 1980). The effect of this strategy was to help consolidate National Party sitting members such as Hinze, who also managed to attract the support of former Labor state president Sir Jack Egerton. The old Labor warhorse was quoted in the paper as 'an unexpected political ally' supporting Hinze, saying 'I'm not campaigning for Hinze, but I think he'll win, and I believe he deserves to win' (*The Australian*, 17 November 1980).

Campaign and policies

With the state of the parties in the outgoing Parliament standing at 34 to the Nationals, 25 Liberals and 33 to the ALP, the *Australian Financial Review* (17 October 1980) claimed that the forthcoming campaign would see the 'most drama' since the Coalition came to power in the 1950s. It characterised the drama as not 'so much an election, but a battle between the National Party and the Liberal Party for Coalition supremacy. The ALP is not rated a chance.'

The Nationals' campaign was rather low key but cleverly populist. They stood on their record, continuing to stress economic prosperity and continued development. Bjelke-Petersen made one initial promise—that Queenslanders would get 'more of the same' with the return of his government: the creation of more jobs, payroll tax cuts and development (*Courier-Mail*, 6 November 1980). The Nationals were suddenly mesmerised with tax reduction. There were reports the party was considering a flat 20 per cent tax policy (that is, setting income tax at a flat 20 per cent rate with no other rates). The party had championed this idea in the recent senate campaign, with one meeting hosted by Flo Bjelke-Petersen, Robert Sparkes and the Coordinator of Enterprise 79, Ray Lord, attracting 200 supporters (*Truth*, 29 September 1980). The Premier, however, pulled off an audacious 'election eve turnaround' on the issue of casinos. After

previously maintaining that Queensland would not allow casinos—‘not while I’m Premier’—he did a sudden about-face and announced that after the election a casino licence would be granted to a Gold Coast location. Russ Hinze publicly welcomed the idea, realising it was likely to be a poll winner on the coast.

The Liberals in contrast stressed that Queensland needed a different style of government (*The Australian*, 4 November 1980). They promised that on becoming the senior Coalition partner they would deliver a democratic, less authoritarian government, with no ‘jobs for the boys’ and the establishment of a parliamentary watchdog on executive actions: a public accounts committee. Llew Edwards launched his run for his party’s seniority with a ‘sustained attack on the National Party and on Bjelke-Petersen’, claiming that the integrity of the Premier must be doubted. He said the Liberals would have nothing to do with extremism, would not confront the churches and would not generate bitterness with minority groups. Edwards also attacked the Premier over his handling of industrial relations, saying Bjelke-Petersen took an irresponsible approach that led to a greater number of strikes. This attack led the Nationals’ President, Robert Sparkes, to proclaim the inter-party fighting was ‘downright irresponsible and crazy’ (*Courier-Mail*, 8 October 1980), and accused Edwards of being disloyal to the Premier (*The Australian*, 17 November 1980). Edwards responded by telling a rally in Brisbane’s King George Square that Joh’s leadership was the ‘butt of national jokes’ (*Courier-Mail*, 20 November 1980). He said he did not want the sort of leadership that had brought Queensland into disrepute. And, while he had hoped he could refrain from personal attacks, ‘the campaign has now taken an unhealthy turn...and the Liberal Party is being forced to take a different approach’. When asked by a heckler why the Liberals had not done anything about integrity in the past, Edwards replied ‘because we haven’t had the numbers’ (*Courier-Mail*, 20 November 1980). Such public feuding continued during the campaign.

To make the point more forcefully, the Liberals ran advertisements with the heading ‘New Leadership’ over a huge photo of Edwards. Under the picture were the party’s main messages

- new policies, more jobs is our top priority
- abolishing payroll tax
- a bonus of \$15 a week (paid to employers of apprentices during block training) and a full-time Apprenticeship Training Scheme
- open and progressive government of responsibility and integrity.

Liberal Party ads proclaimed it was time for a change and the party had the policies ‘to ensure *your* Government works for *you*’. Other promises included the introduction of a code of ethics for ministers; a register of pecuniary interests; a

full and equitable redistribution of electoral boundaries; making life easier for pensioners with greater subsidies and real help for families with the elimination of stamp duty for first home-buyers on homes costing up to \$35 000.

The ALP ran full-page advertisements in the *Courier-Mail* (29 November 1980) with montages of a long list of controversial headlines that had occurred in the past: ‘police wanted judicial probe’, ‘church men rap Jo on marches’, ‘resort plan may cost us millions’, ‘rally and wake as Bellevue crashes down’ and ‘the Russell Island caper’ (where blocks of coastal land that were undrained swamp or covered at high tide were sold to unsuspecting buyers). Labor tried to hit the government’s record, claiming that

This has been the Record of the Liberal-National Party in Office:

- the Bellevue—destruction of a building and a heritage
- Russell Island—another attempt to conceal scandals
- the Premier’s own land
- Tarong power station
- street marches
- special treatment for Iwasaki
- the Port scandal
- education blunders
- ALP a Change for the Best

At the conclusion of the campaign, one local paper declared that the election had been not much fought on policy grounds but on contrasting styles of leadership that might appeal to the electors. It reflected that the campaign had done little except given voters a window into the different political styles offered by the three party leaders. It continued:

Despite its essential dullness, almost its matter-of-fact mediocrity, the election campaign has given the Queensland voters some interesting insights into the styles of the three leaders. And because a leadership style is easily superimposed on a government, we have seen a glimpse of the style of government each leader would run.

Mr Casey, a bluff, hearty chap with some problems in his party, has been largely ineffective. He is very good at the grass-roots level, at what the Americans rather tastelessly call ‘flesh pressing’. But Ed Casey is not inspiring, and does not seem the kind of leader who can unite a divided ALP and bring it back to government after 23 years.

Dr Edwards, an intense man with some problems with his partners, is a nice guy. Too much of a nice guy, his critics say, in a business where

nice guys finish last. With the exception of some intermittent flashes of anger, Dr Edwards has been rather too conciliatory. And it is easy to mistake conciliation for compromise, and thus for weakness.

Mr BP has been...well, Joh. At this stage of his political career, Mr Bjelke-Petersen is not going to change his style, nor his approach. Blunt, no-nonsense, determined, almost stubbornly so at times. Joh knows what is right for Queensland. No risk. Occasionally though, Joh—and his government—have been wrong. They were wrong over the Bellevue demolition and over the street march laws. If we knew all the details, they might have been wrong over Tarong and the Brisbane port extensions. Russell Island, ministerial expenses, the Peel Committee report, the attempts to change the Industrial Commission, the Police Act amendments, the Justices Act amendment...And in its lack of response to criticism, its absolute conviction that it knows what is right, the government has been reflecting the views of one powerful man—the Premier. (*Truth*, 28 November 1980)

State of the parties in the new Parliament

When final results from the election were returned, the Nationals held the same number of seats (35) as they had in the 1977–80 Parliament (but had one win and one loss). Labor recorded a net gain of two seats, taking them to 25 members, and the Liberals lost two, dropping their representation to 22. In the state-wide votes, Labor fell back slightly, recording 41.49 per cent (down 1.34 per cent), the Nationals recorded a slight increase to 27.94 per cent (up 0.8 per cent), while the Liberals, despite losing seats, increased their primary vote to 26.92 per cent (up 1.7 per cent). It was almost a status quo finish. There was some speculation among Labor that a sacrificial gesture was required following Labor's poor showing. It was rumoured that Labor officials favoured dumping Casey as parliamentary leader to make way for the return of Tom Burns, but Casey survived—at least for a little while (*The Age*, 1 December 1980).

If Labor was disappointed it had not made more headway, the main party to feel aggrieved was the Liberals—as they had run a separate campaign, lashed the Nationals in public and gone backwards in terms of assembly seats. They had lost three seats to the Nationals (Lockyer, Southport and Surfers Paradise). To them, the election result was a major rebuff. The losses could, however, have been much higher given that many of the 'ginger group' Liberals (who had more vehemently attacked the government's record) sat on slender electoral margins—such as Terry Gygar (Stafford), Rosemary Kyburz (Salisbury), Brian Austin (Wavell) and Rob Akers (Pine Rivers). These critics had publicly

challenged the Premier on contentious issues such as the demolition of the Bellevue and the defeat of the restrictive Pregnancy Termination Bill. Edwards was quick to accept some of the blame, admitting that ‘Queenslanders obviously did not want the style of government I had offered them. I am man enough to accept that and I congratulate the Premier on his win’ (*The Age*, 1 December 1980). He also said that the Liberals could not become the dominant party in the Coalition until after Bjelke-Petersen retired because of ‘Joh’s strong personal vote’ (*Courier-Mail*, 3 November 1980).

In reality two of the Liberal losses were due largely to Labor’s change of preference tactics. Labor’s decision to shift its preferences away from the Liberals to the Nationals on the Gold Coast resulted in the loss of two Liberal seats to the Nationals: Southport to Doug Jennings and Surfers Paradise to Rob Borbidge. The Gold Coast was beginning to ‘go National’—illustrated most clearly by Borbidge’s huge primary vote in Surfers Paradise of 41.92 per cent, ahead of the Liberals’ sitting member, Bruce Bishop, who managed just 32.83 per cent. Overall, however, the campaign for Labor was not a success. Given the all too obvious feuding within the party, the ALP managed to win just two seats in 1980 at the expense of the Nationals, although they claimed the important ministerial scalp of Max Hooper in Townsville West.

The new ministry

Immediately after the election, the Premier announced that he would reduce the power of the Liberals in the Coalition. He said the ‘Liberals could not expect to retain the same number of portfolios after losing three seats in Saturday’s election’. He also tried to lay claim to the prized Treasury portfolio, claiming that ‘[i]n every other coalition Government in Australia the principal coalition party holds the Treasury. I cannot see any reason why that should not be the case in Queensland’ (*The Age*, 1 December 1980). The Premier was particularly angry that ‘ginger group’ members had publicly challenged (and crossed the floor against) his government in the previous Parliament, also that many renegade Liberal branches had tried to undermine his sitting members and that Edwards had publicly dissociated himself from the government during the election campaign and attacked him personally. Two ministers confirmed that the Premier had bolstered his right to hire and fire ministers by requiring them to sign undated resignation letters. *The Australian* ran the story in July 1980, and later Dr Scott-Young recounted:

It was admitted by Messrs I. Gibbs and M. Hooper that to obtain a ministerial position and a place in that exalted sanctum called Cabinet they signed an undated resignation at the direction of the Premier—a

most honourable man. 'The Australian' of 29 July 1980 contained an article headed 'Joh held resignation letters' which reported that Mr Gibbs admitted to that and had said that Joh had the right to hire and fire. (*QPD* 1981:vol. 283, p. 693)

Scott-Young disputed the fact that the Premier had the right to hire and fire ministers; but in reality the Premier was exercising that power.

So, it was a full month after the election (on Christmas Eve) that Bjelke-Petersen announced his new cabinet (his sixth ministry). The announcement followed a protracted set of negotiations around a new coalition agreement. The negotiations confirmed that the Nationals' leader would remain Premier and that the Liberal leader would again be Deputy Premier and Treasurer, but that the ministers would be divided 11 to seven (meaning that of the 18 ministerial positions, the Nationals had secured an additional place at the expense of the Liberals). Although the Premier had indicated that he would cut the ministry by two from 18 to 16 (*Courier-Mail*, 13 November 1980), he retained the same complement. Three Liberal ministers were demoted to the backbench, each of whom had taken issue with the Premier's leadership. It was further agreed that the Speaker of the House would come from the Nationals (with Sel Muller retaining his position) and the Liberals would provide the Parliamentary Chairman of Committees (resulting in Colin Miller [Ithaca] being elected in March 1981). It was also agreed in the new coalition pact that all legislative and administrative decisions had to be compatible to both parties. Perhaps unsure whether the Liberals would abide by this clause, the Premier spoke of the absolute necessity of maintaining cabinet solidarity in the period ahead.

With a number of ministers retiring (including Ron Camm, Fred Campbell, Nev Hewitt and Charles Porter) and Max Hooper losing his seat, the new ministry had scope for a major injection of new faces. Further scope for change was created by the 'disciplining' of three Liberal ministers who were dropped from the frontbench: Norman Lee, Bill Lickiss and John Greenwood.⁵ So, 10 of the new ministers were novices or had less than 14 months' ministerial experience. Three new incoming ministers who had been appointed in the latter half of the previous Parliament retained their spots (Sam Doumany, Ivan Gibbs and Mike Ahern), and a further seven new ministers were added to cabinet: three Nationals and four Liberals (respectively, Bill Gunn, Bill Glasson and Tony Elliott; and Bill Hewitt, Don Lane, Brian Austin and Terry White). Many of these new entrants would play major roles in the decade ahead, such as Ahern, Gunn, Lane, Austin and White. In all, only four ministers remained in substantially the

⁵ The first two of whom had also reputedly disappointed Edwards, and the third of whom was 'unceremoniously booted out' for incompetence, according to Kev Hooper (in *QPD* 1981:vol. 283).

same portfolio they had held in the previous government (and only eight who had served the full previous term continued as ministers). It was the biggest shake-up of any Coalition ministry since 1957. The full list was

- Premier: Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, NP
- Deputy Premier and Treasurer: Dr Llew Edwards, Lib.
- Minister for Commerce and Industry: Vic Sullivan, NP
- Minister for Justice and Attorney-General: Sam Doumany, Lib.
- Minister for Employment and Labour Relations: William Knox, Lib.
- Minister for Local Government and Main Roads: Russ Hinze, NP
- Minister for Water Resources and Aboriginal and Island Affairs: Ken Tomkins, NP
- Minister for Northern Development and Maritime Services: Val Bird, NP
- Minister for Works and Housing and Leader of the House: Claude Wharton, NP
- Minister for Mines and Energy: Ivan Gibbs, NP
- Minister for Primary Industries: Mike Ahern, NP
- Minister for the Environment, Valuation and Administrative Services: Bill Hewitt, Lib.
- Minister for Transport: Don Lane, Lib.
- Minister for Education: Bill Gunn, NP
- Minister for Lands and Forestry: Bill Glasson, NP
- Minister for Tourism, National Parks, Sport and the Arts: Tony Elliott, NP
- Minister for Health: Brian Austin, Lib.
- Minister for Welfare Services: Terry White, Lib.

This ministry largely of novices was relatively stable until a minor reshuffle in December 1982 (when Vic Sullivan and Ken Tomkins both resigned) and the spectacular meltdown in August 1983. The ministry, however, was far from harmonious. Hinze harboured ambitions to become Premier and had predicted in the campaign that he would be Premier within two years (*Telegraph*, 24 October 1980), later telling a journalist he would ‘take over as premier after the commonwealth games next year’ (*AJPH* 1981:vol. 27, no. 3, p. 392). The scandals and apparent conflicts of interest would, however, constantly impede his elevation, despite the ‘rough-cut’ minister gaining a reputation for his administrative abilities across a massive portfolio.

Epilogue to the era: ‘Grandpa’s Parliament’

A satirical portrait entitled *Behind the Banana Curtain*, by journalist Hugh Lunn, tried to capture the flavour of the political culture in Queensland. It depicted the Nationals in the Queensland cabinet as a ‘gerontocracy’ that was ‘as entrenched—and out of date—as ever’ (1980:126). His pen portraits of the 10 National ministers had them all WASP men, virtually all farmers, none having gone past high school and all from small rural towns—and with an average age in excess of sixty. Lunn declared that Bjelke-Petersen was ‘well past normal retiring age’; Russ Hinze was ‘notorious for outspoken statements’ that ‘made him the best known National party minister after Joh’; Ron Camm was behind Queensland’s moves ‘to sell everything that can be sold’; Nev Hewitt was a ‘man who likes to stay out of the limelight’; Ken Tomkins was amazingly ‘the hottest tip in government circles for Joh’s job’; Tom Newbery had been demoted from police to culture and recreation and was ‘not well known for a man in his position’; Val Bird was the ‘youngest’ and most likely to prosper if ‘his party kicks on in the 1980s’; Max Hodges had been ‘shunted to the tourism portfolio and little heard from since’; Vic Sullivan was also ‘little heard of in the capital’; and Claude Wharton had ‘the widest range of [business] interests’ and was ‘minister for the big money portfolio of works and housing’ (Lunn 1980:123–5). Elsewhere in the book, he mentioned somewhat tongue-in-cheek that Queensland had a ‘reputation for barbaric corruption and repressive, malevolent government’ (1980:195).

Not surprisingly, similar statements had been made on the floor of the Parliament. For instance, Opposition Leader, Ed Casey, in a supply debate on the eve of the 1980 election, declared the government was past it and that the Assembly had become a ‘Grandpa’s Parliament’. He continued:

The coalition is old fashioned, guided by bitterness and wowsersish carry-overs from a disappearing past. It is a coalition that is out of date, out of touch and past its time. For possibly a few months longer it is a costly situation, for Queenslanders, anyhow, of yesterday’s has-beens fighting each other through the last days of what should be tomorrow’s Government. As I said earlier, it has been three years of very bad Government for Queensland. In Queensland, with an election fortunately due, it is not so much a case of ‘Dad’s Army’ as ‘Grandpa’s Parliament’. (QPD 1980:vol. 282, p. 296)

Most of the government considered Casey did not know what he was talking about. They responded to his barbs by poking fun at Labor’s adopted slogan for the 1980 election—‘Labor ready to Govern’—when it was embroiled in a massive factional struggle for control over the party. As Bill Hewitt told the

House: 'Labor ready to govern! That would have to be the sick joke of the decade' (*QPD* 1980:vol. 282, p. 31). It was perhaps not the 'joke' they had in mind, and not the 'joke' that would come to dominate the politics of the 1980s.