POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND QUEENSLAND NATIONALISM

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Denis Murphy had a strong political and historical interest in biography and the personal qualities involved in political leadership. Much of his best history was written during the 1970s—a time when Queensland was seen by many as being ‘different’ from the rest of Australia. Murphy remained sceptical of this orthodoxy and argued in 1978 that, from an historical perspective, ‘the image that a state has in the national picture is not something that is static. It will change and often be related to the calibre of the state’s political leaders’. Queensland in the 1980s seemed to prove him wrong as Australia’s first and only majority National Party government was elected in 1983 (the year Murphy entered Parliament as the member for Stafford) and surprisingly re-elected in 1986. Premier Bjelke-Petersen (1968-87), as the personal embodiment of all that was ‘different’ about Queensland, reigned supreme and appeared invincible, yet he was deposed by his own party in 1988 and the Labor electoral landslide which followed in 1989 shattered more than a few myths about Queensland’s inherent conservatism. Queensland’s status as Australia’s different state was usurped by Victoria in the 1990s, where the iconic leadership of Jeffrey Kennett wrought a revolution in the finances and governance of the State.

This chapter investigates the relationship between ‘Queensland Nationalism’ and political leadership by reviewing the role played by then Federal Opposition leader, Gough Whitlam, in reviving the electoral stocks of Queensland Labor in the 1960s. The chapter argues that there is more than one seam in the lode of Queensland nationalism and that the political culture of the state has been influenced by styles of political leadership to an extent not sufficiently appreciated by previous commentators.

Conventional wisdom holds that Queensland was Prime Minister (1972-75) Gough Whitlam’s electoral nemesis because its political culture was inherently hostile to the progressivism inherent in his reform agenda. Memories of the Gair Affair, the very poor result at the 1974 federal election, the state Labor debacle later that year when the National Party’s electoral motif was denunciation of the ‘centralist, socialist’ Canberra government, the appointment of Pat Field to the Senate in the wake of Bert
Milliner's sudden death, and regular clashes between Whitlam and Bjelke-Petersen over race relations, the environment and just about everything else suggests that Queensland was the harbinger of the collapse of the federal Labor government in late 1975 which left Bill Hayden as the sole Queensland ALP member of the House of Representatives.

Against this tale of woe must be set Whitlam's spectacular popularity in the northern state (and particularly in its north) in the 1960s where he built a deserved reputation as a vote magnet at federal and state elections and at the Dawson and Capricornia by-elections - much to Arthur Calwell's chagrin. By boosting its electoral appeal, he won supporters within and beyond the local ALP organisation whose votes saved him from expulsion from the party in 1966 and aided his actions against the Victorian executive in 1970.

Regrettably, Queensland Labor's electoral revival in the sixties was not mirrored in its extra-parliamentary organisation which was dominated by as an unrepresentative and electorally indifferent trade union clique as was the Victorian branch. The only thing lacking in Queensland was any semblance of ideological fervour - alcoholic fervour there was in abundance. Ironically, Whitlam's electoral achievements and leadership clan temporarily concealed deep flaws within the Queensland ALP organisation which proved totally inept when left to its own resources during the electorally demanding 1970s. Those failures led to the emergence of a Reform Group led by Denis Murphy which secured the restructuring of the Labor Party in 1981, thereby paving the way for the Labor Premierships of Wayne Goss and Peter Beattie.

Premier Bjelke-Petersen v. Prime Minister Whitlam

At the end of 1972 the political stocks of Whitlam and Bjelke-Petersen stood poles apart: the former, his leadership of the ALP secure at last, had led Labor to its first federal election victory since 1946; whereas the latter had a near-death leadership experience in 1970 and the Country/Liberal Coalition had to rely on Democratic Labor Party (DLP) preferences to narrowly win the April 1972 state election. Bjelke-Petersen's precarious political situation, rather than acting as a restraint, encouraged him to confront and challenge the Whitlam government on multiple fronts. As early as February 1973 Queensland Liberal Party president and federal MHR for McPherson, Eric Robinson, publicly rebuked the Premier for his constant attacks on the federal government and declared that 'the Premier should cease to be unnecessarily provocative and antagonistic'.2 Provocation was, however, central to Bjelke-Petersen's 'agitator' leadership style and he ignored Robinson as well as his Liberal Treasurer, Gordon Chalk, who was concerned that his aggression might impede Queensland's access to federal funds for health, education and transport. The Premier's position was defiant: 'I won't take [Federal] money if it's associated with Socialistic and Communist commitments'.

Guided by his press secretary, Allan Callaghan (later jailed for misappropriating public funds), Bjelke-Petersen's political instincts were to be proved sound at the 1974 Queensland election. Encouraged by Labor's poor showing in Queensland at the May 1974 federal election, where the party's failure to win four Senate places was to contribute to Whitlam's sacking on 11 November 1975, Bjelke-Petersen's campaign tactic for the November state poll was to attack the federal government. Declaring that 'I'll not stop until I get rid of the wreckers in Canberra',3 the Premier constantly reminded voters not to be 'lulled by claims that the Queensland ALP is somewhat different from the federal ALP'.4 This 'guilt by association' tactic proved devastatingly successful: Labor's primary vote fell 10 percentage points from 1972 and it was reduced to a mere eleven seats in a parliament of 82.

This election made Bjelke-Petersen's political reputation and provided the bedrock for a further fourteen year dominance of Queensland politics; he was named the Australian newspaper's 'Man of the Year' for 1974 and is easily the state's longest serving Premier. By his clever targeting of the federal government, the Premier proved, so it seemed to many, that Whitlam's political agenda was totally incompatible with Queensland's inherently conservative and exceptionalist political culture. He certainly convinced the local ALP organisation as was evident from remarks made by party secretary, Bart Lourigan, to the media on the Monday after the 7 December state election in which he hectored Whitlam to accept full responsibility for the electoral debacle - including a familiar jibe against 'a lot of academics who aren't in the ALP and know nothing of the grassroots of the party and never go out in the street and talk to the common people'.5

What a Difference a Decade Makes

As Bjelke-Petersen flourished and Whitlam and the ALP floundered both federally and in Queensland after 1975, the conventional wisdom of Queensland particularism became a mantra chanted by the media, politicians
of all persuasions and certain academics. While it would be ahistorical to deny a certain 'difference' in the Queensland polity, its precise nature and source deserve more analysis. In the midst of the 1974 state election campaign the perceptive Brisbane correspondent [DJ Murphy] for the Nation Review (22 November 1974) reminded its readers that 'Whitlam had built something of a reputation of a legend in Queensland in the 1960s ... The Labor victories in the Dawson and Capricornia by-elections set him as a favourite Queensland son'. In fact from the time he became Deputy Leader of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party (FPLP) in 1960, Whitlam staked a claim to Queensland as his electoral turf. This was both politically courageous and calculating: courageous because the circumstances of the 1957 Split had made the splinter Queensland/Democratic Labor Party (Q/DLP) electorally strong; and calculating since if Whitlam could enhance Labor's appeal in such a hostile environment it would confound his rivals and assist in realising his ambition to replace Arthur Calwell as party leader.

To that end Whitlam campaigned enthusiastically in Queensland at all 1960s federal (1961, 1963, 1966 and 1969) and state elections (1960, 1963, 1966 and 1969). It proved to be worth the effort, as Queensland returned a higher than national ALP primary vote at all the 1960s federal elections. Of these, the 1961 election stands out as a Whitlam triumph: Labor achieved a swing of 10% on the 1958 result and won 11 (61%) of the 18 House of Representatives seats and helped take Calwell to within two seats of the Lodge. Bill Hayden, who first won Oxley in 1961, described the Whitlam mystique:

Whitlam dazzled the Queensland electorate. On a platform of northern development he mesmerised the northerners with visions of rivers being turned inland and running backwards, of dunes and roads littering the vast and sparsely populated top end of the country. Forget the economies, it is the votes that count ... Here at last was someone who understood the State, who was capable of thinking the way Queenslanders did. Thereafter Queensland loved Whitlam.

Whitlam anticipated Colin Hughes' insight that 'Queensland politics are the politics of development, concerned with things and places rather than people and ideas'\(^\text{10}\) and understood that 'north Queensland electorates are especially susceptible to northern development blandishments'.\(^\text{11}\) As important as general elections are, the Dawson (1966) and Capricornia (1967) by-elections well illustrate the sub-tropical appeal of Whitlam and indicate reasons why his allure faded after 1972.

\(*\text{Give Holt a Jolt*}: \text{The Dawson By-Election}\)

In the 1960s the federal Queensland coastal constituency of Dawson extended from just north of Gladstone in the south to include Ayr in the north, with the provincial city of Mackay as the major population centre. Dawson was a 'sugar' seat and had been held continuously by the Country Party since its creation in 1949. It was rendered vacant by the death of George Shaw who had been elected in 1963. Despite presenting no danger to the Coalition's 22 seat majority, the by-election took on more than usual prominence since it was the first to be held in Queensland since 1939 and the first electoral test of the popularity of Harold Holt as the new Prime Minister. In August 1965 the ALP had chosen Dr Rex Patterson as its candidate for the forthcoming 1966 general election. Patterson was head of the northern division of the federal Department of National Development. Prime Minister Robert Menzies decided it was 'monstrous' for a public servant to remain in a confidential post advising a government he intended to oppose and had him 'sacked downstairs' to Canberra.\(^\text{12}\) Patterson, who was passionate about northern development, stirred strong emotions. He was described as 'a theorist and an intellectual'\(^\text{13}\) and Prime Minister Holt saw him as 'a crusader with a fanatical gleam in his eye'.\(^\text{14}\) So outraged was he at Patterson's alleged disloyalty that his erstwhile employer, the Minister for National Development, David Fairbairn, went out of his way to campaign against him.

The Country Party candidate was a local cane farmer, John Fordyce, whom journalist Peter Bowers described as being 'as raw as unrefined sugar'.\(^\text{15}\) The Liberals left the contest to their Coalition partners. The DLP, whose candidate polled 6.8% of the vote in 1963, did not contest the by-election. The ALP therefore had a chance of taking the seat. Nevertheless Dawson became a honey pot for all of Australia's last 'meet and greet' election campaigns. In all, ten ministers, five ALP frontbenchers and dozens of federal MPs visited Dawson.

The standout campaigner was deputy Labor leader Gough Whitlam.
Unlike Calwell, who came to Dawson only once and left declaring the seat "unwinnable", Whitlam spent eleven days in the electorate including the entire final week. He and Patterson complemented each other as they played the government on its alleged neglect of north Queensland. Whitlam also managed to energise the Queensland ALP machine and reactivated many dormant branches in Dawson. Even the Australian Workers' Union (AWU) which was not affiliated with the ALP and had refused to support federal Labor candidates since the 1965 Mt Isa strike because of the support Jim Cairns and Clyde Cameron had given to rebel union leader Pat Mackie, donated $400 to Patterson's campaign.

The Dawson campaign was conducted in the midst of heightened leadership tension between Calwell and Whitlam. Whitlam's objective in Dawson was to show that he was a vote winner, but this was a risky strategy since 'Dr Patterson is very much a Whitlam protege and Mr Whitlam would shoulder much of the blame if Dr Patterson failed to gain substantial ground'. At the beginning of the last week of the campaign the Country Party believed it had Dawson in the bag and on election eve few of the well-informed journalists thought Labor could win. No opinion polls were conducted during the by-election.

Patterson achieved the seemingly impossible by securing a 12% swing to the ALP and taking Dawson with 55% of the vote. The Sydney Morning Herald saw wider political implications in the result:

The Dawson by-election is a triumph for Mr EG Whitlam. It was under the Deputy Leader of the Federal Opposition's banner that the brilliant Commonwealth public servant, Dr Patterson, became the successful political candidate. Mr Whitlam showed again, as he did ... to such devastating effect in the 1961 Federal elections, that he is the man to bring the sweet taste of success to the Labor Party (28 February 1966).

But not everybody in the ALP thought so. Patterson's victory is more remarkable in that it was achieved against the backdrop of a significant factional battle between Whitlam and the party's Federal Executive acting in Calwell's leadership interests. In the middle of the campaign the Federal Executive did Patterson's cause little good when it overlooked north Queensland-based Senator Jim Keefe and appointed Victorian ALP State Secretary Bill Hartley to the chair of the party's National Development Committee. Of greater concern was the outbreak in early February 1966 of a bitter dispute between Whitlam and the Executive over the volatile issue of government funding to private schools.

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It was on this day that Patterson arrived to be sworn in as a member of Parliament and he decided to pay a visit to the office of Allan Fraser, the member for Eden Monaro, who had campaigned for him in Dawson. Fortuitously Patterson was present when Fraser received a phone call from a gleeful Calwell informing him that 'we've got the numbers to expel the big bastard'. Appalled, Patterson alerted Queensland ALP State Secretary, Tom Burns, who phoned the Queensland delegates Jim Keefe and Fred Whitby and told them if they voted for expulsion they would be removed from the Executive. The expulsion motion failed seven votes to five. Politics, as Denis Murphy often pointed out, involves an element of chance and Whitlam can thank his sub-tropical guardian angel because, without the series of contingent events, he would have been expelled from the party. Henceforth Whitlam always referred to Burns as 'the man who saved me'.
Despite its political significance Dawson, like so many by-elections, was a poor guide to general voting trends. Labor suffered a heavy defeat at the 1966 federal elections - though Patterson increased his majority in Dawson - and Whitlam replaced Calwell as party leader in April 1967. Whitlam's position was again to come under serious challenge in 1968 when, as part of his strategy to reform the ALP federal organisation and restructure its Victorian branch, he impetuously resigned the leadership and in recontesting was almost defeated by Jim Cairns. In contrast to 1968, in which Whitlam's political career sailed close to 'oblivion, the first year of [his] leadership passed tranquilly enough'. By contrast 1967 was a 'calamitous' year for Prime Minister Holt, which ended with his death by drowning on 17 December.

"...[A]nother outburst of Queensland nationalism" (C A Hughes): Capricornia 1967

Two by-elections numbered amongst the Prime Minister's 1967 political woes: the first was occasioned by the retirement of Hubert Opperman in the Victorian seat of Corio which, after intensive, Dawson-like campaigning by Whitlam, was won by Labor with a 9.5% swing on 22 July. The next month the politically eccentric but very popular Labor member for the north Queensland seat of Capricornia, George Gray, died, thereby providing another opportunity for a concentrated projection of the Whitlam image. While Capricornia shared the southern boundary of the site of Whitlam's earlier triumph in Dawson, the two by-elections were conducted in quite different political circumstances. Unlike Dawson, Capricornia was a seat held by the ALP since 1961 and, given the difficulty governments usually encounter in winning Opposition seats at by-elections, was unlikely to change hands. However, like Dawson, Capricornia was to prove another example of Whitlam's then celebrity status in Queensland.

Local party members preselected as their candidate Rockhampton medical practitioner Dr Doug Everingham, who had contested Dawson in 1963, but who had stood aside for Rex Patterson at the 1966 by-election. Whitlam was not alone in expressing unease about Everingham's likely attraction to conservative, rural Queensland since the candidate did not hide his religious agnosticism and had been active in various controversial, local political causes. The leader of the DLP Senator Vince Gair was quick to denounce him as 'a Communist', and federal Treasurer Billy McMahon, in opening the Liberal Party campaign, referred to Everingham as 'a left-winger with way-out social, economic and religious beliefs'. These comments earned McMahon a mild rebuke from Prime Minister Holt and a predictably harsher one from Deputy Prime Minister Jack McEwen who insisted that it was not the Country Party's style to run down a political opponent. Because he was a prodigious writer of letters to the Rockhampton Morning Bulletin, Everingham's political views were well known in the electorate long before he became the Labor candidate. What was not so well known to outsiders that he was a very well-liked general medical practitioner who, in the days before Medibank, often forgot to bill his less wealthy patients. While little more was seen or heard of McMahon during the campaign, his personal denigration of Everingham had a lingering impact, with even the conservative Courier-Mail calling McMahon's remarks 'a blunder'.

When a newspaper reported that Dr Everingham was personally disliked by both the bishops of Rockhampton, Anglican Dr Shearman publicly denied it. He went on to describe Labor's candidate as 'a very ethical and moral person' who was 'devoted to the welfare of other human beings'. The pro-DLP magazine Newsweekly sought to discredit Shearman as a political rival, but this was negated by the Catholic bishop Dr Rush, whose sympathies usually lay with the DLP, refusing to condemn Everingham for his religious beliefs. Despite the absence of opinion poll data, the general consensus was that McMahon's personal remarks (the product of 'poor advice and worse champagne' according to Graham Freudenberg, but denied in Parliament by McMahon) harmed the Liberals rather than their intended target. Given that religious belief and religiosity, especially when combined with ruralism, are often associated with political conservatism and that religious adherence in Queensland was then the strongest of all the states, the willingness of Capricornians to behave as electoral secularists raises important issues dealt with later in this article.

While joining the chorus of McMahon's detractors, Whitlam criticised Holt for not opening the Liberal Party campaign himself, suggesting that this was typical of the 'Government's indifference to Queensland's problems'. For his part, Holt was indecisive as to what to do in regard to Capricornia. Saddled with a weak candidate, he had campaigned poorly in Corio by concentrating on the Vietnam war while Whitlam highlighted domestic issues. Holt's dilemma was that, despite its controversial candidate, Labor was always the favourite in Capricornia which should have encouraged him to stay shy of another Liberal defeat. However, the Prime Minister was under increasing pressure from within his own party and finally entered the Capricornia contest hoping to redeem his reputation as a vote winner and to build some political momentum for the half Senate election...
scheduled for November 1967.

Not only did he enter the campaign, he declared that he was in Capricornia to win it, having decided that the ALP held the seat on Gray's personal vote. Initially he repeated the Corio mistake by campaigning on defence and foreign policy, highlighting Everingham's well-known opposition to the Vietnam war and Labor's subservience to 'faceless men'. When this failed to gain traction, the Prime Minister told a public meeting in Rockhampton a week from polling day that 'development was the basic issue' in the by-election, but offered only a general defence of the Coalition government's expenditure record, which he compared unfavourably with the last year (1949) of the Chifley Labor administration.

Holt's last-minute switch in campaign focus was a serious tactical error because it belatedly recognised the legitimacy of Whitlam's consistent emphasis on water policy and northern development. The gaff was confounded by the absence of any new government initiatives in either area. Despite his concerns about Everingham's 'radicalism', Whitlam entered the by-election with gusto and was in the 'middle of everything, most of the time.' He, Everingham and Patterson - 'the big three of northern development' - campaigned together throughout the electorate. On 26 September Whitlam had Patterson move an urgency motion in the House of Representatives censuring the government for its failure to fund water and power projects in Queensland which meant that four days before polling the debate was broadcast live into Capricornia on ABC Radio.

The actual result in Capricornia saw a rise of just under one percent of the primary vote to Everingham (53%). Of significance was the fall in the DLP vote from 9.3% in 1966 to 6.9%, despite the party spending lavishly on a campaign that stressed Everingham's agnosticism and extremism.

Queensland Exceptionalism: a re-consideration

In the decade following his Capricornia victory Whitlam had reformed the federal ALP and won government in 1972 and defended it in 1974 - thereby becoming the first Labor Prime Minister to win two consecutive elections. In 1975 he became the first Prime Minister to be dismissed by a Governor-General as a consequence of a Senate failure to pass supply. Queensland now presented as Whitlam's nemesis: it returned the lowest ALP House of Representatives' vote of any state in 1975 and only one of eighteen seats. Labor's failure to win four Queensland Senate places in 1974 called into question the commitment and competence of the 'Egerton Machine' which had effectively controlled the ALP since the 1957 Split. The chronic incompetence and authoritarianism of the ALP organisation spawned what came to be known as the 'Reform Group', led by Denis Murphy, which was to achieve sweeping party reform in 1981. Whitlam was its distant patron.

Confronted with increasing criticism from some of its rank and file membership, the response of the Breakfast Creek Junta was a mixture of authoritarianism, such as suspending the present Premier Peter Beattie from party membership for three months in 1979, and assertions that Queensland was inherently anti-Labor and the party was doing the best that could be expected. On the latter point, Whitlam (and his amanuensis DJ Murphy) had this to say at the 1977 Labor-in-Politics Convention:

'It is too easily said that Queensland is a write-off for Labor. I do not believe it; I never have. I have the happiest memories of the campaigns I fought in this state, first in the federal elections in 1961, later in individual seats like Dawson and Capricornia. The great temptation for the party, with its present difficulties in Queensland, is to come up with silly theories about the nature of politics and the Queensland people. Whenever things go badly there is a natural tendency to look for far-fetched answers and blame the people instead of ourselves. I don't think we need to go beyond the obvious for an explanation of our troubles: the party has been run-down and defeatist, our policies have been too little explained and too little understood.

In particular we must reject the idea that Queenslanders are somehow different from other Australians.'

Whitlam and Murphy were as one in identifying the causes of Labor's weakness in Queensland as political not cultural, a view which then commanded little support amongst historians, political scientists and journalists.
In 1970 the Department of Adult Education at the University of Sydney re-issued a series of earlier Current Affairs Bulletin articles under the title Politics at State level—Australia (Rork, 1970). Each contributor had something to say about the political character of their state: for New South Wales it was "tranquillity" (Turner); Victoria "conservatism" (Staley); Queensland "development" (Hughes); South Australia "an assumption-gap" based on social cleavage (Reid); Western Australia "state-nationalism" (Reid); and Tasmania "regional loyalties" and "domestication" (Boyle). Thus each author could find something that differentiated their state from the others, though some of the differences were not particularly strong. Also, Queensland did not stand out as being different from some imagined national benchmark. As Denis Murphy and Roger Joyce argued in the Introduction to Queensland Political Portraits "we would concede that Queensland politics are different, but different only in a sense that applies to each of the other states".

A view generally supported by another Queensland historian Humphrey McQueen who explained Queensland's difference was "anchored in the primary-industry bias of [its] political economy". A psychological study of university students in the late 1960s revealed that "Queensland was stereotyped with the most uniformity" by residents of the other states. Yet the adjectives most frequently applied to Queenslanders - casual, friendly, outdoor, apathetic, carefree - were noticeably apolitical; and whereas Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania were stereotyped as conservative, Queensland was not.

Murphy and Joyce's depiction of the nature of 'Queenslandism' was controversial, and contested by many. In addition to popular media portrayals of the state as Australia's 'Deep North', there existed a strong intellectual tradition which stressed Queensland's exceptionalism. It began at least as early as 1960 when historian Alan Morrison laid down the gauntlet:

"Anyone who enquires into the state of politics in Queensland is immediately faced with some striking paradoxes. At the same time he will find little attempt at explanation partly because of a belief among local citizens that their State is so different from the others that such divergences are only to be expected. He will become aware of a conscious sense of unity, associated with the conviction that decisions affecting this State can only be taken by Queenslanders, and that anyone who has not lived in the state for some years can have little hope of understanding it."

While located at the extreme end of the endorsement of 'Queensland Nationalism', Morrison's contention attracted qualified endorsement from political scientist Margaret Cribb twenty years later. For Cribb the key to unlocking the state's political psyche is 'rural fundamentalism and the values that go with it' including 'rural conservatism' and 'anti-intellectualism'. Finally, in 1987 journalist and author, Peter Charlton, argued that "Queensland is a state where chauvinism has been raised almost to a religion ... Queensland is more than a geographic entity. It is also a state of mind".

Is there any possibility of a rapprochement between these two, apparently irreconcilable, interpretations of Queensland's political history? The hint that there may be is to be found in Margaret Cribb's description of Premier Bjelke-Petersen as the 'personification' of rural fundamentalism and conservatism. Similarly, the persona of the Premier holds centre stage throughout Peter Charlton's book State of Mind: Why Queensland is Different. One attempt at reconciliation was made by Roger Scott and his colleagues in 1986 when they suggested that "all these types of explanations [historical, economic, cultural] have relevance in assessing the state of this particular, and perhaps, peculiar state. The remainder of this paper will advance a related but different argument based on an analysis of the sources of 'political culture'.

Political Culture: Theory and Practice.

Dennis Kavanagh defines political culture as "a shorthand expression to denote the emotional and attitudinal environment within which the political system operates". Borrowed originally from anthropology, political culture remains a contestable concept: it is methodologically fuzzy and can be misleadingly reductionist in treating political institutions and processes as dependent variables incapable of exerting an independent influence on a political system. Nevertheless the concept has been employed to explain differences in the political cultures of the American states, concluded that despite its problems:

It is possible, nonetheless, to make the case that research in state politics ought to be comparative, and that it can in important ways fruitfully be guided by the organising notion of political culture.

Influenced by such research in the USA and Canada, Jean Holmes and Campbell Sharman set out in 1977 to test the hypothesis of cultural homogeneity and politically insignificant state differences. Their
interpretation of opinion poll data encouraged them to endorse Rufus Davis' earlier characterisation of Australian federalism as 'diversity within unity', but by 1993 Sharman had reluctantly come to the conclusion that '... in general terms, there are not distinct [Australian state] political cultures of the kind demonstrated in the Canadian literature'.

Here is not the place to conduct a detailed exegesis on the political culture literature, but some brief remarks are relevant. First, political culture is a subjective not an objective concept; to say that Queensland was/is characterised by population and economic decentralisation is not to say that its political culture is decentralism. Second, 'a political culture is not static but will [may?] respond to new ideas from within the political system or imported from outside'. Third, if we are to admit the existence of a dominant political culture we should also concede the co-existence of sub-cultures and even insurgent cultures. It is commonly accepted in the literature that different political cultures are the product of different objective characteristics of a given society and that these include: history, ethnicity, economic development, urbanisation and so on. Also, it is generally assumed that political culture and political leadership are asymmetrical, that is, that different cultures produce different leadership styles and not vice versa; for example, Patricia Smith argues that 'the central values and aspirations nurtured in Queensland’s political culture find embodiment in the political rhetoric of the Premier [Bjelke-Petersen]'. Could it be though that the two are symbiotic and that certain leaders help craft the political culture in which they operate?

Margaret Cribb anticipated this line of argument when she pointed out that rural fundamentalism 'did not come to Queensland in the baggage train [of Bjelke-Petersen]'. Queensland changed after the 1920 'Loans Affair' helped detail the economic reformism and social progressivism of Ryan and Theodore. All of Bjelke-Petersen’s predecessors, save Gair, were conservative agrarians and almost all of them, including Gair, were ‘strong, powerful, authoritarian leader(s)’. They were unrestrained by passive parliaments, weak Oppositions and, until recently, a non-investigative media. Whenever dissident cultures emerged, be they in the form of industrial action or public demonstrations they were ruthlessly crushed. Not only did the Premiers dominate their state, they also helped to create the dominant political culture which sustained them. But, while it was dominant, it was not a static mono-culture.

Despite Morrison’s comments, Queensland did not become the ‘different’ state in popular imagination until the premiership of Bjelke-Petersen (1968-88); from the mid-1920s to the mid-1950s the tag was owned by Victoria. Bjelke-Petersen was the classic political ‘agitator’; ideologically extreme, authoritarian, contemptuous of opposition, aggressive and combative. By exploiting and exaggerating traditional Queensland separatism and hostility to Canberra, Bjelke-Petersen crafted a political culture that was as inhospitable to the Whitlam style in the 1970s as the 1960s culture was welcoming. Consider, however, the Premier’s predecessor once removed: Frank Nicklin (1957-68) was a ‘conciliator’ of whom Brian Stevenson writes:

[Honest Frank] Nicklin’s real significance to Queensland politics lies in the part his personality played in making the 1960s the most tranquil decade of this century in state politics. Once he became premier, he was willing to share the power for which he had waited so long. Rarely trying to override the will of his cabinet and party, he never leaned on his Liberal colleagues. He presided over rather than dominated his men. Yet, though by political standards a gentleman, he was able to survive, and indeed thrive, without a single leadership challenge in over a quarter of a century as Country Party leader.

The contrast with Bjelke-Petersen is so stark as to require no comment. To conclude, Denis Murphy pointed out how rapidly South Australia’s image - ‘a stodgy conservative place’ - under the Premiership of Tom Playford changed to one of ‘a liberally minded state with progressive views’ under Don Dunstan.

This is not an isolated transformation, Henry Bolte to Dick Hamer and John Cain to Jeff Kennett wrought similar changes to the image of Victoria. The evidence suggests that if we are going to employ the concept of ‘political culture’ we should be prepared to concede that as well as influencing leadership styles, leaders can also influence political cultures.

Endnotes
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