



LANG AND WHITLAM: A Comparison

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Preface

High amongst the most controversial figures in Australian Labor Party history, and Australian political history in general, are Lang and Whitlam. Lang was Premier of New South Wales from 1925 to 1927 and again from 1930 to 1932. Whitlam was Prime Minister of Australia from 1972 to 1975, winning a second term in between in 1974. During these times they dominated the Australian Labor Party and the political scene in general. Both became embroiled in controversy during their terms in office and both suffered the same political fate in the end, dismissal by officials of the British Crown by recourse to the Australian Constitution. Lang was dismissed by Governor Game in May 1932, while Whitlam was dismissed by Governor-General Kerr in November 1975. Their dismissals, some forty years apart, stand as high points of drama in Australian political history.

this Thesis is a comparison of Lang and Whitlam concentrating on the background, rise in the Australian Labor Party, dominance of it, the "radical" and/or more controversial actions during the periods of ~~power~~^{power}, and aspects of the dismissals, of both political figures. Therefore, Chapter 1 deals with Jack Lang in regard to the above criteria, while Chapter 2 deals with Gough Whitlam in the same way. Chapter 3 is a comparison noting similarities and differences between Lang and Whitlam on the above criteria by combining the findings of Chapter 1 and Chapter 2.

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Chapter 1: JACK LANG.

Jack Lang was the leader of the New South Wales Labor Party from 1923 to 1939, he was Premier of New South Wales from 1925 to 1927 and again from 1930 to 1932. After his first period as Premier he was regarded as a radical by many inside and outside the labour movement. But it was during his second term as Premier that he developed a reputation for controversy. He was dismissed in May 1932 by Governor Game after he directed public servants to break the law by disobeying a command from the Federal government. Lang's economic policy during the depression of repudiation of interest owing to British bondholders was certainly controversial, it aroused conservative outrage and even led to the formation of various anti-political movements in New South Wales, the most sinister being the New Guard. It was revealed in early 1932 that they had drawn up plans for the forceful overthrow of the Lang government. Lang's close ties^s with the industrial unions, his radical sounding policies, and his open defiance of Federal authorities scared many people, but for the majority of those in the labour movement in New South Wales who saw^w things differently, he was a hero.

Background: From poor childhood to successful businessman and politician.

Lang's early life was characterized by poverty. He was born John Thomas Lang on 21 December 1876 "on the east side of George Street, Sydney¹". Being the sixth of ten children of a low income family, his early childhood was hard. For a time they lived in Surrey Hills, one of the poorest areas of Sydney. Lang's first job was as a paper boy to help out his struggling family. He managed to fit in only a few years of formal schooling, he spent a few years at St. Francis Marist Brothers

1 Nairn, B., 'The Big Fella', pg. 30.

School in Castlereagh Street which was "a primary school catering for the children of the Sydney slums²" At about age 10 he was sent away to relatives in Gippsland, Victoria, where he spent a few years at Bairnsdale Catholic School. At about age 14 he returned to Sydney, where after a year at night school he started looking for employment. His early jobs included work on a poultry farm and as a driver of a horse drawn bus. Nairn argues that these early experiences made Lang intimately aware of the plight of low income people³.

However, Lang's fortunes improved quickly. After a short stint of workingⁱⁿ the bookshop of H.J. Douglass where he took the opportunity to do some "assiduous study⁴", he got a job as an office boy for an accountant "where his natural intelligence and persistence enabled him to learn the rudiments of book-keeping, which he later developed into accountancy and business skills⁵". Lang had acquired some specialist skills and was on his way out of poverty.

In 1899, Lang took up the position of Manager of R.W.J. Harley's estate agency in Auburn, an expanding outer suburb of Sydney. As the area underwent a land boom, Lang was shrewd enough to capitalise on this. In November 1901, in partnership with Herbert Dawe^s, Lang opened his very own real estate business. Lang had developed into an excellent real estate agent and auctioneer. It was not long before his estate agency was the most prosperous in the Auburn area. Hard work and determination combine^d with a little luck had made Lang a wealthy man.

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid, pg. 31.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid, pg. 32.

In the process, Lang had become quite well known in the rapidly growing and developing Auburn area. His reputation was enhanced by his increasing involvement in community affairs. He helped to organise the annual St. Joseph's Hospital fete and the Cinderella dance for the St. John's Catholic Young Men's Association, and in 1906 he helped to form a Starr-Bonkett Society in Auburn which provided interest free loans to members by lottery to buy a home⁶. Thus, Lang quickly became a local identity which was an essential requirement for success in local politics.

Lang also had political ambitions. About 1901, Lang joined the Auburn Labor League which was a local Labor branch for the State seat of Granville. He quickly became its Secretary and by 1909 was its President. He also joined the Nepean Federal Electoral Council which represented the Australian Labor Party in the Federal seat of Nepean. He had also become its Secretary in 1906 and its President in 1910. Lang had success in municipal politics as well, after being elected to the Auburn Municipal Council in 1907 he became Mayor in 1909 and again in 1910. This was a remarkable track record up to 1910, Lang could have certainly sought pre-selection as the federal labor candidate for the seat of Nepean or as the State Labor candidate for the seat of Granville for the Federal and State elections of 1910 with a good chance of gaining it.

However, Lang decided not to seek pre-selection at the 1910 elections. His decision was probably based on the understanding that the area had long been a conservative strong-hold, but that increasing industrialisation of the area would improve Labor's chances in the future. When Labor won Nepean at the Federal elections and significant gains were made in the seat of Granville at the State Elections of 1910,

6 Spearitt, P., in Radi, H., and Spearitt, P., Jack Lang, pg. 7.

Lang realised that the seat of Granville was winnable at the next State elections due in 1913 and that he would run for pre-selection,

I had become interested in political prospects of my own. Auburn was in the Granville electorate, which had been represented for twenty years by John Nobbs ... It was in the Federal electorate of Nepean, and after examining the Federal figures, I decided that Granville could be won for the Labor Party ,,⁷

This was another example of shrewd observation by Lang. He had calculated correctly. After being chosen by the Auburn Labor League as their candidate and acknowledged by the other Labor leagues in the Granville seat area as Labor's best hope he went on to win the seat by "just over 400 votes⁸" at the State elections on 6 December 1913.

Lang's early political rise was rapid. By 1913 he had become an elected member of the New South Wales parliament. Lang's success can be attributed to many things, his successful business and his constant community work for example. They gave him respectability and popularity. However, one must not under-rate the presence of Lang himself as a factor in his early success, especially in the Labor leagues. He was "6 feet 4 inches (193cm) tall and weighed about 16 stone (101kg)" and according to Nairn could look and act "menacing⁹". With such a formidable physical appearance and forceful personality he was bound to stand out. Lang was well suited to the atmosphere of Labor leagues,

... the leagues and associated electoral councils comprised lively and enthusiastic members, and Lang had found himself at ease with them, uniquely equipped to handle the rumbustious private and public meetings involved¹⁰.

7 Lang, J.T., *The Turbulent Year*, pg. 32.

8 Spearitt, P., in Radi, H., and Spearitt, P., (eds.), *op.cit.*, pg. 15.

9 Nairn, B., *op. cit.*, pg. 1.

10 Perks, M., in Radi, H., and Spearitt, P., (eds.), *op. cit.*, pg. 37.

Lang's dominance over the Auburn Labor League in particular demonstrated that even at this early point of his political career he could exert influence over rank and file labour members, although only on a small scale at this time.

Lang's power-base: the industrial unions.

Lang's rise in the Labor caucus and to the leadership of the parliamentary party relied heavily upon a "fortuitous set of circumstances"¹¹. However, Lang's part in it must not be under-rated. He was clever enough not to place himself outside the Party, as so many of his fellow Labor parliamentarians had, over the conscription issue of 1916-1917. He also deliberately chose Dooley's side against the State Executive, dominated by the Australian Workers Union, during the factional strife in the Party of 1922-1923. He was also responsible for organising the support of enough trade unions on Dooley's side to "smash" the influence of the Australian Workers Union over the Party at the State Labor Conference of 1923,

Lang quietly organised the support of moderate unions in the Labor Council, including Jim Tyrrell of the Municipal Workers ... E.D. Hagrath of the Printers' Union and others. The faction's greatest stroke, however, lay in securing the decisive assistance of Albert Willis, leader of the Miners' Federation ... The support of union leaders such as these assured the Dooleyites of a majority for the 1923 state conference¹².

11 Perks, M., in Radi., H., and Spearitt, P., (eds.) op.cit., pg. 137.

12 Ibid, pg. 33.

When Dooley decided to resign the leadership of the parliamentary party anyway after the 1923 Conference, Lang had become the hot favourite to replace him. After all, it had been Lang, more than anybody else, ^{who}~~wo~~ had been responsible for the exoneration of Dooley at the Conference. On 31 July 1923 caucus elected Lang as leader of the New South Wales Labor Party, he defeated Billy Dunn by 21 votes to 11.

However, Lang's leadership never remained solid. In June 1924, after less than a year as leader, he had to face a challenge by caucus for his position. Lang survived this challenge and retained the leadership by a solitary vote on the second ballot. After the first ballot Tom ^MHutch had gained more votes than Lang (17 votes to 16), another contender, Stuart-Robertson, had gained two votes. In a second ballot with Stuart-Robertson eliminated from the contest, Lang beat ^MHutch by one vote (18 votes to 17)¹³.

Lang had become disliked by a significant portion of caucus because of his individualism, he had a propensity to act without consulting them. According to Nairn, Lang was basically an insecure person who mistrusted almost everybody and was, therefore, unable to win over the confidence and loyalty of his caucus associates. He liked doing things his own way, and often resorted to insulting and bullying anyone who opposed him¹⁴. What Lang's fellow Labor parliamentarians probably resented most about him was his secrecy. For example, in September 1924 Lang moved a censure motion against the conservative Fuller

13 Nairn, B., op. cit, pg. 72.

14 Ibid, pg. 71.

Government in parliament to the total surprise of his caucus colleagues whom he had not consulted with first¹⁵. Lang's insensitivity alienated much of his caucus.

Thus, Lang began to rely more and more heavily on Willis and the trade unions he had organised in 1923 to stay in power as Labor leader. It is argued by some historians that Lang extended his industrial power base in late 1925 to include an alliance with the more militant Trades and Labor Council representing 60 to 70 unions with approximately 120,000 members¹⁶. The Secretary of the Labor Council was Jock Garden who was a renowned communist. Lang had demonstrated his opposition to Communism in 1923 when he combined with Willis at a special conference to expel members of the Communist Party from the Labor Party, among those expelled was Garden. However, Garden had become frustrated by the Communist Party's lack of success and wanted to rejoin the Labor Party. The evidence suggests that Lang "threatened from within (by caucus) ... turned for assistance to Garden and the Trades and Labour Council", proving that he could be "unscrupulous"¹⁷ to protect his leadership.

The nature of the alliance between Lang and the industrial unions is not certain. However, it is unlikely that either had complete control over the other. It seemed a mutually beneficial arrangement with Lang receiving the support of the industrial unions as long as he played the part of the upholder

15 Ibid, pg. 73.

16 Hagan, J., in Radi, H., and Spearitt, P., (eds.) op. cit., pg. 40.

of the industrialists' aims. Nevertheless, the conservative anti-Labor press saw it differently most of the time, they often claimed that Lang was getting his orders from Garden¹⁷ which was a frightening prospect for most Australians because Garden had been a well known member of the Communist International which was directed from the Kremlin in Soviet Russia.

When Lang became Premier of New South Wales in June 1925 he made sure that the aims of the industrial unions had top priority. Lang legislated for the 44 hour week which was Labor Council policy. He also legislated to improve working conditions for miners. For example, the Lang government passed the Coal Miner Rescue Act¹⁸. An Act was also passed by the Lang government re-instating the sacked railway workers of 1917, the Railways Union was so grateful that they made Lang a life member¹⁹. The leaders of the Miners' Federation also occupied prominent positions during the Lang administration of 1925 to 1927. Willis, who had been appointed to the Legislative Assembly, was leader of the government in the upper house, while J.M. Baddeley, President of the Miner's Federation and parliamentary member for the seat of Newcastle since 1922, was appointed by Lang to the most important industrial post in the government, he became Secretary for Mines and Minister for Labour and Industry. Through their alliance with Lang, the industrial unions were in a great position to influence the policy of his government and did.

17 Ross, L., in Louis, L.J. and Turner, I., (eds.) The Depression of the 1930's, pg. 133.

18 Ibid, pg. 45.

19 Lang, J.T., op. cit., pg. 61.

In return, the industrial unions backed up Lang's leadership of the Party. The Australian Workers Union remained hostile to Lang because of the 1923 episode and were a definite threat to his leadership. However, the industrial unions propped up Lang at State Labor Conferences where they had a majority and elected members to the Executive that were friendly to Lang²⁰. Lang's leadership was also threatened by caucus, he had survived a challenge to his leadership in June 1924 by the narrowest of margins. When moves were made within caucus to get rid of Lang as leader and replace him with Peter Loughlin in September 1926, the industrial unions threw their support behind Lang. They sent a deputation to meet with caucus and lobby support for Lang before the vote was taken. The result of the vote was a tie, both Lang and Loughlin received 23 votes. After recourse to party rules it was decided that, since Loughlin had not outrightly defeated Lang, Lang remained leader²¹. Lang had survived another leadership challenge by caucus even more narrowly than the first.

In November 1926, the ^{industrial} industrial unions helped to convene a special conference to confirm Lang's leadership beyond the control of caucus. Delegates of trade unions and Labor leagues overwhelmingly confirmed Lang's leadership in a motion that was carried by 274 votes to 4 and that gave him almost dictatorial powers over the Party for the present term of parliament. The resolution of the Special Conference empowered Lang "in the event of circumstances arising which in his opinion imperil the unity of the party to do all things and exercise such powers as he

20 Hagan, J., in Radi, H., and Spearitt, P., (eds.), op. cit., pg. 43.
21 See Nairn, B., op. cit., pg. 127.

deems necessary in the interests of the movement²²". This was proof enough that Lang's power base was the industrial unions, he also received the overwhelming support of the Labor leagues. When the State Executive split in April 1927 after the State Labor Conference had adopted the so-called "Red-Rules" which gave more representation to trade unions on the State Executive, the anti-Lang faction of the Executive possessed the support of a majority in caucus and the instant recognition of the Federal Executive which was dominated by the Australian Workers Union and thus anti-Lang. Tom Hutch^M was appointed leader by the anti-Lang faction. Nevertheless, they eventually failed because the overwhelming support of the rank and file Labor movement in New South Wales rested with Lang and the Lang faction of the Executive. It was reported that "ninety five unions, 155 branches and thirty one electoral councils supported Lang while, respectively, three, twenty two and four opposed him²³".

Radical politics.

Lang was never a communist, but his politics moved considerably to the left in response to his alliance with the industrial unions. Whether this was a real change in Lang's attitude or merely political opportunism is not certain. He was undoubtedly grateful to the industrial unions for their invaluable support for his leadership. He expressed this gratitude after surviving the second caucus challenge to his leadership in September 1926 by saying "I can never forget the sterling loyalty of

22 in Ibid, pg. 135.

23 see Ibid, pg. 151.

the great industrial movement and of the leagues throughout the country²⁴". Certainly it is possible to imagine that without this extra-parliamentary support, Lang would have quickly disappeared off the scene of New South Wales Labor politics. One thing is certain, Lang increasingly became the upholder of the industrialists' cause, and as he did so his popularity amongst the working class increased to reverence²⁵.

During Lang's controversial period as Premier between 1925 and 1927 he legislated for, in addition to the industrial measures mentioned before, e.g., the 44 hour work week; widows pensions, child endowment, compulsory workers' compensation insurance and the right of women to be appointed to the Legislative Council. At the time, these measures were considered radical. Lang recalls that conservative opinion regarded his Widows' Pensions Bill as "communism"²⁶. The Opposition also tried to alter the Child Endowment Bill by demanding that it be funded by a reduction in the basic wage, this was resisted by Lang in response to pressure from the trade unions. It is argued by Nelson that the conservative resistance to Lang's social welfare policies was based on the fear that these measures would re-distribute wealth, "They presented the threat of re-allocation of rights, privileges or wealth beyond accepted norms"²⁷.

24 in Ibid, pg. 131.

25 In 1932, bronze and plaster busts of Lang with the inscription 'The People's Champion' were produced. See Ross, L., in Louis, L.J., and Turner, I., (eds.), op. cit., pg. 132.

26 Lang, J.T., op. cit., pg. 62.

27 Nelson, H., in Rādi, H., and Spearitt, P., (eds.) op. cit., pg. 80.

Lang was also criticised by conservatives for extending the role of government beyond the limits which they thought[†] were desirable. They dislike^d Lang's action of legislating in parliament to set working hours instead of leaving the matter for arbitration. They also disliked Lang's action of expanding the government insurance branch of the Treasury to handle the business of his compulsory workers' compensation policy. Lang also introduced new procedures for parliament and by doing so was criticised for breaking parliamentary traditions²⁸. lang introduced day sittings for the New South Wales parliament, sessions were to start at 10a.m. instead of the old 4p.m. This measure can be seen as a reflection of Lang's professionalism when it came to politics, his attendance record at parliamentary sessions had always been exemplary²⁹. Nevertheless, Lang's conservative opponents hated the change because they feared disruption to their business interests which was their first priority, "Lang challenged the notion of parliament as a place for the leisurely considerations of gifted amateurs³⁰".

Lang's frustration at the refusal of the Legislative Council to pass his legislation and at the Governor for refusing to intervene to his advantage caused him to produce his most controversial bill during his first term as Premier, the Legislative Council Abolition Bill,

28 in Ibid, pg. 75.

29 See Ibid, pg. 75-77, and also Nairn, B., op. cit., pg. 70.

30 Nelson, H., in Radi, H., and Spearitt, P., (eds.), op. cit., pg. 77.

In February 1926 my fight with Governor de Chair over the upper house came to a head. Fed up with his refusal to grant me sufficient appointments to the Legislative Council to assure the passage of legislation for which I had mandate, I introduced the Legislative Council Bill³¹.

Abolition

The abolition of the upper house had been a part of the Labor platform for some time³² but it was generally kept low profile because it was perceived, probably rightly, as too radical for voters come election time. Many people regarded the upper house as a check against the rash and irresponsible policies of the government of the day. However, the upper house with its generally conservative nature had long been a thorn in the side for Labor governments and their reforming policies.

The controversial bill was passed in the Legislative Assembly where Lang's government had a majority but it was, quite predictably, rejected by the Legislative Council. Even recent Labor appointees to the Legislative Council rejected the bill or refused to vote for it, which amounted to the same thing - 2 labor appointees voted against it and 5 absented themselves from the voting³³, they were later expelled from the Party.

Lang also attempted to take action against the conservative press, who had by late 1926 intensified their attacks on himself and his government, by introducing the Newspapers Tax Bill which sought to impose a tax on "every copy of a newspaper sold in the State". As Lang says "the newspapers became almost incoherent in their rage against the

31 Lang, J.T., op. cit., pg. 66.

32 See Nairn, B., op. cit., pg. 95.

33 Lang, J.T., op. cit., pg. 66.

34 Ibid, pg 68.

proposal³⁴". The bill passed both houses of parliament but the newspapers made a successful appeal to the High Court for an injunction "on the grounds that the tax was an excise duty and not within the constitutional powers of the Government of New South Wales to levy³⁵". This episode revealed that Lang was quite prepared to use the powers of parliament to retaliate against his detractors. By the end of Lang's first term as Premier, which ended with the defeat of his government at the elections of October 1927, he was generally regarded as a radical and an "extremist"³⁶.

When Lang became Premier again in the midst of the Great Depression in November 1930 he further enhanced his reputation as an extremist, Crisp says "For months before the elections Lang made every effort to distinguish himself by his radical-sounding policies from the hamstrung Scullin Federal Government³⁷". He had criticised the Federal labor Government's handling of the economic crisis. Scullin, Labor Prime Minister, had been reluctant to make cuts in government expenditure which were bound to be unpopular to the labor movement at large, but on the advice of Otto Niemeyer, an adviser from the Bank of England, he had decided that cuts were necessary. Lang immediately went on the attack knowing that the Labor movement in general would not tolerate spending cuts in social services and maybe wages. In fact, the New South Wales and Federal labor executives at once condemned Scullin's decision³⁸.

35 Ibid pg. 68.

36 Ross, L., in Louis, L.J., and Turner, I., (eds) op. cit., pg. 133.

37 Crisp, L.F., Ben Chifley, pg. 69.

38 in Ross, L., in Louis, L.J., and Turner, I., (eds.) op. cit., pg. 134.

Lang may not have had a plan of his own at this stage, but he voiced his opposition to any policy of cutting down social welfare payments or wages. he belived that Scullin was being dictated to by the banks³⁹ who had no sympathy for the working class. He argued that the Niemeyer recommendations would "reduce Australians to the gypsy standard of the peons of South America or to the rice bowl and loin cloth of workers in Malaya⁴⁰". It was clear that the Scullin Government was relying on the banks to alleviate the economic crisis by advancing sufficient credit to cover government expenditure.

In February 1931, the State Premiers including Lang, who had been re-elected as Premier in New South Wales by this time, were summoned to Canberra by Scullin for a meeting on the financial crisis. It was at this conference that Lang provided his own alternative plan for dealing with the economic problem. Later called the Lang Plan, it consisted of three main points (1) "That the governments of Australia pay no further interest to British bondholders until Britain had dealt with the Australian overseas debt in the same manner as she had settler^d her own foreign debt with America." (2) "That in Australia, interest on all government borrowings be reduced to 3 per cent" and (3) "That immediate steps be taken by the Commonwealth Government to abandon the gold standard of currency and set up in its place a currency based upon the wealth of the country to be termed the Goods Standard⁴¹." It was the first point of this plan that caused the most controversy. The ~~nationalist~~^{Nationalist} premiers and conservative press immediately called it repudiation.

39 Lang, J.T., The Great Bust, pg. 215 and 261.

40 Lang, J.T., The Turbulent Years, pg. 90.

41 Ibid, pg. 100, 101.

Lang had renounced repudiation before the 1930 State election but he could defend the first point of his plan on the grounds that the repudiation of interest owing to British bond holders would be a temporary measure pending a re-adjustment of Australia's obligations that was more suitable under the present economic climate of financial constraint⁴². He argued, quite logically, that if Britain could secure more suitable terms for settling her debt obligations to America, "why then couldn't Britain do likewise with our^f debts ...?⁴³". Lang argued that the payment of interest on overseas loans accounted for the bulk of government expenditure and that if these interest rates were reduced, as called for in his plan, the need for spending cuts in the areas of social services and wages could be avoided.

Regardless of Lang's explanations the conservative press did not let up, conservative politicians were also hostile. The Scullin government was also opposed to the Lang Plan, they were still hoping for a bank solution to the crisis, Lang's proposal, they argued, would only discourage potential investment in Australia. however, the New South Wales State Executive quickly gave support to the Lang Plan. Lang claimed that he was not consulted and that it was a decision of the rank and file who were "fed up with the vacillation of Scullin and Theodore (Federal Treasurer) in Canberra. They wanted action⁴⁴". When a by-election was called for the Federal seat of East Sydney, a traditionally safe Labor seat, the New South Wales State Executive announced that the Labor candidate would campaign with the Lang Plan.

42 Clark, D., in Radi, H., and Spearitt, P. (eds.), op. cit., pg. 144-145.

43 Ibid, pg. 145.

44 Lang, J.T., The Great Bust, p. 368.

The Scullin government would have obviously assumed that Lang was behind the whole thing involving the East Sydney by-election. The Federal Executive, now firmly behind Scullin and his policy of negotiating a solution to the crisis with the banks, protested at the course of action taken by the New South Wales State Executive. Scullin even tried to reprimand Lang but to no avail⁴⁵.

The Labor candidate, E.J. Ward, campaigning on the Lang Plan went on to win the Federal by-election for the seat of East Sydney on March 7, 1931. Lang claimed this as a victory for his plan, it had been endorsed by a predominantly working class electorate⁴⁶. The reaction of Scullin and the Federal Executive was swift. A special Federal Conference was convened on March 27, 1931, which duly expelled Lang and the New South Wales State Executive and those New South Wales members of the Federal caucus who took part in the East Sydney campaign from the Australian Labor Party. The new Federal member for East Sydney, E.J. Ward, was also ostracised. However, Lang made it clear that under him New South Wales would follow the Lang Plan and in April 1931 defaulted from making his State's interest payments due to British bond holders for that year.

By mid 1931 the Scullin Government had been forced to make reductions in social services and wages as a pre-requisite for the continuation of credit from the Commonwealth Bank. Again, Scullin convened a conference of the State Premiers to reach a unilateral agreement on an

45 See Robertson, J., J.H. Scullin: A Political Biography, pg. 310.

46 Lang, J.T., The Great Bust, Chapter 68 'East Sydney ~~Cove~~ Mandate for ~~Lang~~ Plan', pg. 397-400. Save

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economic plan. Lang, who attended, again vigorously defended his plan but reception to it was as cool as in February. However, a compromise was reached on a policy of reduction in government spending of 20 per cent and this together with other proposals comprised the Premiers' Plan which was "signed by all six State Premiers on 10 June 1931". Lang signed the plan on the proviso "that governments would decide for themselves where reductions in their expenditure were to be made"⁴⁷. Lang limited the reductions, called for by the Premiers' Plan, in his State to the salaries of Government employees, Lang introduced a "radical" measure to make this possible, "a wage ceiling of 500 pounds per annum on every public servant, be they judges, Ministers of the Crown, parliamentarians, or the Governor"⁴⁸. Thus, even though he had compromised his firm stand against reductions by signing the Premiers' Plan, he managed to redeem himself to his working class supporters and those on low incomes such as pensions by limiting the cuts to government employees.

In fact, it was the loyalty of the New South Wales Labor movement to the Lang Plan that contributed to the demise of the Scullin labor Government at the Federal elections of December 1931. The decision of the Federal Conference of March 1931 to expel the State Executive had split the Labor Party in New South Wales so that pro-Lang Plan Labor candidates ran against official Australian Labor Party candidates thus splitting the Labor vote and considerably improving the Opposition's chances. The United Australia Party won the elections by a "landslide"⁴⁹.

47 Peter Cook in Cooksey, R., (ed.), The Great Depression in Australia, pg. 99.

48 Clark, D., in Radi, H., and Spearitt, P., (eds.), op. cit., pg. 148.

49 In Crisp, L.F., op. cit., pg. 84.

Lang was dismissed as Premier and his government's commission terminated by the Governor of New South Wales, Sir Philip Game, on May 13, 1932. According to Game, Lang had ordered civil servants to break the law and that he had no choice but to sack Lang. In April 1932 Lang had again decided to default on making his State's interest payments to British bond holders. The Federal Government consisting of the United Australia Party took immediate action in the Federal parliament to get, one way or another, the money that New South Wales owed. They passed the Financial Agreement Enforcement Act which authorised them to take possession of the revenues of the New South Wales Government. When Lang blocked this move by "suspending the collection of income tax", they moved to take possession of the New South Wales Government's bank accounts. However, Lang denied them again by withdrawing a million pounds and storing the money in the New South Wales Treasury⁵⁰. Lang had defied the Federal authorities twice, but on the third time he was unlucky. The Federal government announced that all civil servants coming into possession of any part of the revenues of the New South Wales Government must hand these into the Commonwealth Bank. When Lang issued a circular countermanding the directions of the Federal government proclamation, Lang had ordered civil servants to hand such revenues into the Treasury instead, he was telling government employees to break the law. It was at this point that the Governor intervened and asked Lang to withdraw the circular. When Lang refused to^{do} also, Governor Game used his powers under the Constitution to dismiss Lang and his government.

50 In Ross, L., in Louis, L.J. and Turner, I., (eds.), op. cit., pg. 163.

Lang's radical politics, especially the Lang Plan, was appealing to the working class. The Lang Plan was overwhelmingly adopted by the Labor movement in New South Wales. It is not difficult to understand why, after all, Lang's plan was the only one that proposed some form of repudiation of overseas debt before any cuts in social services and wages should be made. However, Lang's radical policies had a different affect on conservatives who obviously saw them as a threat to the established order, they saw nothing wrong with the plans of the financial experts like Otto Niemeyer which called for across the board cuts in social services and wages even if these would hurt the working class and the poor more than them.

The conservative outrage caused by the first point of Lang's Plan that called for some repudiation of interest payments to British bond holders probably demonstrates their overwhelmingly loyalty and patriotism to Britain. Regardless of the desperate economic conditions in Australia during the Great Depression, it seems that conservative opinion was not even willing to contemplate a re-adjustment of Australia's debt obligations to British bondholders more suitable under the crisis.

The most notable aberration of this sentiment was the New Guard which was formed at the Imperial Service Club in Sydney on February 16, 1931. It consisted mainly of Australian ex-servicemen. Their connection with Britain was obvious, they had fought on Britain's side during the First World War. The platform of the New Gard clearly demonstrates that they put British interests first, the first two principles were "unswerving loyalty to the Throne" and secondly, "All for the

British Empire⁵¹". Lt. Colonel Eric Campbell, founder and leader of the New Guard, claimed that the New Guard was "a defensive organization pledged to uphold law and order constitutionally and to support the police to that end⁵²". But this was contradicted in early May 1932 when a secret group of the New Guard attacked Jock Garden and police raided the headquarters of the New Guard and found elaborate ~~plans~~ ^{plans} drawn up for the forceful removal of the Lang government⁵³. The para-military New Guard was an extreme conservative response to Lang and his radical policies. It is worth noting that New Guard membership in late 1931 was conservatively estimated at 40,000 and that this figure had dropped to only 1,500 in mid 1933⁵⁴. There is no doubt that the demise of Lang and the return of conservative government in the form of the United Australia Party after June 1932 had a lot to do with this.

By June 1932 it was also clear that Lang had also alienated the moderate middle class by his radical policies and actions. John Manning Ward says "The popular question on 13 May was not why Lang had been dismissed but why Game had delayed so long. Lang still had supporters, as the election of June was to show, but the majority opinion was already with the ~~Government~~ ^{Government}⁵⁵". At the post-dismissal elections in June 1932 Lang gained 24 seats, a loss of 31 seats from the State elections of November 1930. The United Australia Party won the elections by a comfortable margin of 42 seats - 66 seats to 24. This was confirmation of Lang's falling out with the majority of the people of New South Wales.

51 Louis, L.J., and Turner, I., op. cit. pg. 186.

52 Campbell, E., The Rallying Point, pg. 129-130.

53 In Mitchell, P., 'Australian Patriots: A Study of the New Guard', pg. 173-174.

54 In Mitchell, P., 'Australian Patriots: A Study of the New Guard', pg. 178.

55 Manning Ward, J., in Radi, H., and Spearitt, P., (eds.), op. cit., pg. 174.

Conclusion.

Lang came from a relatively poor background but was able to become a successful businessman while still in his twenties. He entered local Labor leagues and municipal politics at about the same time with great success. In 1913 he was elected to the New South Wales State parliament for the seat of Granville.

Lang was able to advance in caucus when there was an exodus of parliamentarians from the Party over the conscription issue of 1916-1917. He was further able to promote himself to the leadership of the Party when factional strife intervened again in late 1922 to 1923. By organising an alliance of trade unions against the Australian Workers Union (A.W.U.) at the 1923 State Labor Conference, Lang smashed the influence of the A.W.U. over the Party Executive and thus over the Party in general. The A.W.U. remained his bitter enemies inside the Labor movement after this.

Lang's problems of working harmoniously with his team, the Labor caucus, soon became apparent. His actions were those of a loner - he was secretive, suspicious, and abrasive at times. Moreover, it soon became clear that he wanted to be a dominant leader. This caused considerable dissension within caucus which demonstrated the resistance of the labor parliamentarians to Lang's style of leadership. In June 1924 he survived a leadership challenge from caucus by a solitary vote after a second ballot.

Lang's shaky hold over caucus probably encouraged him to cement his alliance with the trade unions that he had organised in 1923, particularly with the Miners' Federation and its Secretary Albert Willis. There are strong arguments that Lang included the Trades and Labor Council into this alliance between 1925 and 1926. The Secretary of this trade union organisation was a recognised communist, Jock Garden. Lang was the driving force behind the expulsion of communists from the New South Wales Labor Party in late 1923. His rapprochement with Garden was therefore proof of his over-riding ambition to remain as leader. For his part, Lang pushed through industrial legislation when he became Premier of New South WAles in 1925. For their part, the industrial unions propped up Lang's leadership of the Party. In late 1926 they went as far as to give him almost dictatorial powers over the Party at a specially convened Labor conference. There was no doubt that Lang's power base was the industrial unions.

While Premier of New South Wales from 1923 to 1927 and again from 1930 to 1932, Lang became famous or infamous for his radical politics. Certainly Lang had to satisfy his allies, the industrial unions, to keep them on side, but it is uncertain whether Lang's radical actions were purely and simply political opportunism. Nevertheless, Lang's radical policies such as the abolition of the Legislative Council and the repudiation of interest owing to British bond holders aroused the indignation of conservatives who respected the traditions of government and still held strong loyalties toward Britain. They had even felt threatened by Lang's social welfare policies of 1925 to 1927, e.g., Widows Pensions and Child Endowment, because they saw these as an attempt to re-distribute wealth.

This conservative fear of Lang found extreme expression in the para-military New Guard formed in early 1931 which had about 40,000 members in a few months time.

When Lang was dismissed in May 1932 by the Governor of New South Wales it was clear that lang had lost the support of most of the people outside the Labor movement. He retained much working class support in the state election which followed in June, but the comfortable victory of the United Australia Party clearly indicated that most people were glad to see him go. They had probably decided that Lang's radical policies and his stubborn behaviour towards the Federal Government were only destabilising the State further.

Chapter 2: Gough Whitlam

Gough Whitlam was Prime Minister of Australia between 1972 and 1975. When Whitlam became Prime Minister in 1972 he was the first Labor leader to win office for twenty three years, since the Chifley Labor Government which was defeated in 1949. When he was re-elected in early 1974 he became the first Labor leader to win consecutive terms in office. His second term as Prime Minister was dramatically cut short by the intervention of the Governor-General, Sir John Kerr, on 11 November 1975. During his truncated second term, his Government became embroiled in controversy over unconventional and dubious loan raising activities. Bad economic policies which caused inflation and unemployment to spiral upwards also made the Whitlam Government unpopular ^{by} ~~in~~ 1975. The Opposition, the Liberal Party and the Country Party, sought to capitalise on the unpopularity of the Government by using the Senate, where they possessed a majority of one, to block supply ^y ~~by~~ deferring the budget and force Whitlam to call an early election. However, Whitlam refused to yield to the tactics of the Opposition which produced a deadlock that the Governor-General felt compelled to break by sacking Whitlam and his Government.

Background: Middle-Class Labor Man

Unlike many members of the Australian Labor Party, up to the late 1960's at least, Whitlam's origins were middle class. He was born Edward Gough Whitlam on 11 July 1916 in the relatively affluent Melbourne suburb at the time, Kew. At the time his father was employed by the Federal Public Service, previously he had worked for the Victorian Public Service. As a

result of his appointments, the Whitlam family moved to Sydney in 1918 and eventually to Canberra in 1928. Fred Whitlam had been appointed Deputy Crown Solicitor in 1921 and when ~~Cabinet~~^{Canberra} became the national capital it became necessary for him and his family to move there. In 1936 he became Crown Solicitor, a prestigious position. Thus, Gough Whitlam was provided with a relatively easy start to life because of the success and financial security of his father,

Fred Whitlam was one of the nation's most senior - and most highly paid - public servants. Socially, he was very much part of Canberra's upper crust. Even during the Depression, the life-style of the Whitlam family was virtually unaffected, and life for young Gough was comfortable to say the least.¹

Gough Whitlam received the fullest amount of formal schooling available, from preparatory school to university. When his family resided in Sydney he attended Mowbray House and Knox Grammar School, both were private educational institutions. When his family moved to Canberra he was forced by circumstances to attend a government school, Telopea Park High, as there were no other secondary schools there at the time. When Canberra Grammar School became established he transferred there, ending his formal education at a private school. At 18 he was sent to "St. Paul's College at Sydney University to study Arts and then Law, with no financial pressures on him at all." As Oakes points out, this was a sharp contrast to Dr. H.V. Evatt who up until Whitlam became the leader of the Australian Labor Party in 1967, was the Party's only leader to possess a university education - and he "had to pull himself up by the boot straps in the best Labor tradition to achieve it."²

1 Oakes, L., Whitlam P.M., pg. 2.

2 Oakes, L., and Solomon, D., The Making of An Australian Prime Minister, pg. 49.

Nevertheless, Whitlam proved to be a brilliant student possessing great natural intelligence and the ability to study tirelessly for hours which gave him a broad general knowledge of history, politics and law. He used his knowledge to great effect at debates, he gained a reputation as an excellent debator while at college. He also involved himself in the University's theatre productions and developed into a good actor displaying a great sense of timing when performing humorous sketches for University Revues. He also involved himself in journalism, he became editor of the College's magazine, The Pauline, in 1938 and remained editor until the end of 1941 when he left to join the Royal Australian Air Force. He was a tall young man (6 feet 4 inches) with a strong athletic build and regarded as quite handsome which prompted The Pauline to say, on the occasion of his leaving, 'Divinely tall, and more divinely dark and handsome, it is unfortunate that Gough could not claim direct descent from Olympus.'³ There seems little doubt in Oakes' account of Whitlam's university days that he was roundly liked and well regarded there.⁴

Despite the quite intense political activism on campus during Whitlam's years at university he remained non-political in the practical sense of involvement. This did not mean that he was not interested in political developments taking place at home and on the world stage, quite the opposite is true. He studied events closely and was well informed but he adopted an objective attitude to them. It is revealing that The Pauline said of Whitlam in their farewell tribute to him, 'His opinions concerning notabilities of the day and current world events were always of interest, as

3 In Oates, L., Whitlam P.M., pg. 28.

4 Ibid, pg. 26-38.

not only did he bring to the study of them a broad classical background, but he was singularly free from dogma and partisanship.⁵ This attitude can be seen as a reflection of his father, whom as a senior Commonwealth public servant fulfilled his obligation to remain non-partisan. Oakes and Walter argue that his father's influence was much more profound than this. It is argued that it was the influence of Fred Whitlam on the young Gough that was crucial to his later political orientation which diverged from what might be expected from a young man who was the product of a financially comfortable middle-class background and who was soon to be a financially secure member of the middle-class himself,

On the face of it, the environment in which he grew up was of a type which might have encouraged a conservative outlook. But running counter to this was the influence of his father, a somewhat austere Presbyterian whose lifestyle was relatively frugal considering his income and position in the community.⁶

To those who knew him well, Fred Whitlam was a humanitarian concerned with social equality and human justice. He displayed tolerance and showed great concern for the human rights of all people which he later dedicated his life full-time to,

The key to Fred Whitlam's character was tolerance - he loathed any form of prejudice on grounds of class, religion or race - and his overwhelming pre-occupation was human rights. In 1950 and again in 1954 he was Australia's representative on the United Nations Human Rights Commission, and after his retirement as Crown Solicitor he continued to act as a consultant to the Federal Attorney-General's Department on legal matters involving human rights.⁷

5 In Oates, L., and Solomon, D., The Making of an Australian Prime Minister, pg. 51.

6 Ibid, pg. 49.

7 Ibid, pg. 49.

Certainly his father's socially oriented disposition must have, to some extent at least, imbued in his son a concern for equality and justice for all and this may have been a factor when he chose to join the Australian Labor Party - the Party which traditionally stood for social equality and justice. Certainly his mother too, who shared the views of her husband, must also have had some influence over him.

However, it was a constitutional referendum seeking greater powers for the Federal Government which aroused him into taking political action for the first time. His father's influence can still be perceived as a factor because his father was a senior employee of the Federal Public Service and he may have come to appreciate Federal administration through him. It was the 1944 Constitutional Referendum sponsored by the Curtin Labor Government to widen the Federal government's powers to deal with all aspects of the economy for the purposes of post-war economic reconstruction that sparked Whitlam's involvement in politics. More precisely, it was the decision of the Opposition Liberal Party under Robert Menzies to oppose the Government's position in the referendum that was the spark. Whitlam could not believe that Menzies would oppose the initiative of the Government because Menzies himself had sought to widen the constitutional powers of the Federal Government while he was Attorney-General in the Lyons Government in the defeated referendum of 1937 on civil aviation and marketing. At the time, Whitlam was a flying officer for the Royal Australian Air Force based at Gove in the Northern Territory, with the permission of the Commanding Officer he campaigned strongly at the base for the support of his fellow servicemen for the Curtin Labor Government in the referendum.

Oakes says, "Edward Gough Whitlam is one of those rare politicians whose political commitment can be dated from a single event."⁸ It was the defeat of the Labor Government's proposals in the referendum of 194~~4~~⁴ and especially the "contemptuous and cynical way Menzies in particular among the conservative forces had treated the proposals"⁹ that made Whitlam join the Australian Labor Party a year later, in 1945. The result of the referendum also made Whitlam determined to improve the Australian Constitution, he was to say in 1961 about the aftermath of the 1944 referendum that, "My hopes were dashed by the outcome and from that moment I determined to do all I could to modernise the Australian Constitution."¹⁰ Unbeknown to him at the time, it would be the Australian Constitution and more particularly the reserve powers of the Crown embodied in it that would facilitate his sacking from the office of Prime Minister by the Governor-General in November 1975.

After leaving the Royal Australian Air Force Whitlam completed his Law degree and was admitted to the bar in 1947. He soon built up a small but successful practice concentrating on the tenancy field.¹¹ His legal career was brief because in 1952 he won pre-selection as the Labor candidate for the Federal seat of Werriwa at the by-election scheduled for May 1953. The seat became vacant when the sitting Labor member, H.P. Lazzarini, decided to retire from parliament, Whitlam had won pre-selection before in 1950 for the State seat of Sutherland which was a safe conservative seat, he made some ground on the Liberal Party members, but not enough to take the seat from him. Nevertheless, Whitlam's tireless campaigning in

8 Ibid, pg. 51-52.

9 Walter, J., The Leader, pg. 21.

10 In Oakes, L., and Solomon, D., The Making of An Australian Prime Minister, pg. 53.

11 Ibid, pg. 50.

1950 had made him quite well known. When he stood for Labor pre-selection to replace Lazzarini he was competing against nine other hopefuls. However, he was the only one who had the presence of mind to canvas every Labor member participating in the election for the position. At the Federal by-election held in May 1953 Whitlam held the seat of Werriwa for the Australian Labor Party, he achieved a 12 percent swing to Labor thereby "trebling his predecessor's majority."¹² Whitlam the middle-class Labor man had become one of the Party's members in the Federal parliament.

The rise to leadership and reform of the Party structure.

When Whitlam entered Federal parliament in 1953 he was 36 years old which in itself made him stand out among his Labor colleagues in parliament as they were a lot older than him¹³ Whitlam was also unacquainted with the trade union movement which also made him stand out among his colleagues, "he was the first of a new breed of educated middle-class activists in what had been predominantly a working class and union party."¹⁴ He faced the same resentment by some members of the Labor caucus as he had encountered from old Labor ideologies^{ues} in the Darlinghurst branch when he first joined the Australian Labor Party. Also because of his middle class background the predominantly working class members of the local Labor branches which he participated in were initially suspicious of him.¹⁵ However, Whitlam surmounted these

12 Ibid, pg. 50.

13 Ibid, pg. 53.

14 Walter, J., op. cit. pg. 23.

15 Oakes, L., Whitlam P.M. pg. 51.

problems by his hard work which showed him to be dedicated to the cause and by his overwhelming intellectual superiority. And so it was within caucus, he quickly gained the respect of his fellow Labor parliamentarians with his thorough preparation before parliamentary sessions and debates which meant that he was always well informed and able to make crucial and incisive remarks against the Menzies Government.

Whitlam supported the leadership of Dr. H.V. Evatt during the split in the Australian Labor Party of 1954-55. In support of Evatt he moved in caucus to remove the Deputy Leader, Arthur Calwell, but was unsuccessful. He charged the Deputy Leader for encouraging disunity. In 1960 after Evatt's resignation as Party leader, the caucus elected Calwell to the leadership. When Whitlam decided to throw his hat into the ring for the position of Deputy Leader and won he was forced to work closely with the man he had tried to get removed earlier.

The victory of the post of Deputy Leader was a bonus for Whitlam as he had not expected to win. He was running against several older and more favoured campaigners, the most favoured being Eddie Ward who had entered Federal parliament in March 1931 advocating the controversial Lang Plan against the Scullin Labor Government's prescriptions for the economic crisis of the Great Depression. Walter says, "Whitlam's success in that ballot has been regarded as mainly engineered by 'numbers men' Lance Barnard and Pat Kennelly."¹⁶ But it is also possible that caucus were looking to the future when they elected Whitlam to the Deputy Leadership. He was young, only forty-three years old, ambitious, and

16 Walter, J., The Leader, pg. 24.

clearly endowed with talent and ability. Walter argues that many in caucus "were won to Whitlam's support by his drive, knowledge and considerable forensic skills in the House ..."17 No doubt many were impressed by the qualities Whitlam had displayed as a parliamentarian and were willing to support him.

After becoming Deputy Leader in 1960 he almost became Deputy Prime Minister in 1961 after the Australian Labor Party came within two seats of winning government in the federal elections of that year. However, after the failure in the 1963 Federal election two things became quite clear to Whitlam. As Labor had come so close to victory in 1961 any challenge to Calwell's leadership would have been futile but after the 1963 loss in which the Labor Party lost ten seats, Whitlam sought to replace him as leader with himself. Also, it became clear to Whitlam that a major factor in the loss of 1963 was the fact that the Australian Labor Party Conference and Executive which determined Labor Party policy was unrepresentative of the Party's parliamentary leadership. This was revealed by journalist Alan Reid who "coined the slogan 'the 36 face less men' to describe the unknowns dictating policy to the 'public' parliamentary figures"18 and was exploited devastatingly by Menzies during the 1963 election campaign. Reid had observed Labor's Parliamentary leaders, Calwell and Whitlam, waiting outside the Hotel Kingston in March 1963 "under a street lamp while inside the Conference's 36 delegates, for the most part political unknowns, discussed issues vital to Australia's foreign policies and defence,"19 at a Special Conference ^{of} ~~at~~ the Federal Labor Executive.

17 Ibid, pg. 24.

18 Ibid, pg. 26.

19 Reid, A., The Whitlam Venture, pg. 17.

Thus, Whitlam set about gaining the leadership of the Party and reforming the Party's structure - the Australian Labor Party Federal Conference and Executive. The tactics used by Whitlam are described by Walter as 'oppositional' and 'confrontational'. When Calwell insisted on another term after the Labor defeat of 1963 he increasingly sought to undermine his leadership. When Whitlam was visiting New Zealand some months later he "carelessly referred to Calwell as 'too old and weak' and to himself as 'better equipped' to lead his country."²⁰ In early 1966 Whitlam said that he was 'destined to be leader for at least a year.'²¹ All these remarks can be seen as acts of disloyalty to his leader. But none of these remarks were more interpreted as disloyalty than his comments regarding the Vietnam issue during the 1966 Federal election campaign. Calwell's stand on the Vietnam issue for the 1966 elections was one of 'immediate and unconditional withdrawal'. However, when asked his views, Whitlam took a softer and more conciliatory line claiming that a Labor Government's decision on the issue should be based on consultations with the United States and South Vietnamese Governments and the United Nations, he went on to say that if it was decided to maintain and reinforce Australian troops they would be regulars and not conscripts.²² Oakes says that "Whitlam's critics in the A.L.P. saw his statement as a knife plunged deliberately in Calwell's back."²³

20 in Walter, J., The Leader, pg. 27.

21 in Oakes, L., and Solomon, D., The Making of an Australian Prime Minister, pg. 58.

22 Ibid, pg. 59.

23 Ibid, pg. 59.

Whitlam also confronted the issue of Party reform head on. In 1965 he clashed with the Victorian Executive of the Party on the issue of union tickets. It had become public knowledge that at some trade union elections in that State Labor candidates would run with communists on a joint ticket to increase the chances of a left-wing result. The Victorian Executive of the Party had developed a left-wing character ever since the split in the Labor Party of 1954-1955 over the concern of communist influences over the A.L.P. The anti-communist faction which later formed into the Democratic Labor Party was strongest in Victoria. The left-wing character of the Victorian Labor Party had made it quite unpopular at State elections. It had been Whitlam's aim to make the Victorian branch of the Party more appealing to the electorate by making it more representative of other more moderate and right-wing Labor viewpoints. For Whitlam, an end to the practice of running union tickets with communists was a great place to start. He convinced the Federal Executive to place a ban on the practice which the Victorian branch initially decided to resist but backed down later when Whitlam threatened to resign over the issue and move a 'spill' in caucus which might well have brought down Calwell from the leadership, he was an ally of the left-wing Victorian branch.²⁴ More direct ^{intervention} ~~information~~ in the Victorian branch of the A.L.P. by the Federal Executive was initiated in 1970, the Victorian branch was officially dissolved and re-constructed again providing for greater representation through proportional representation. This made the Victorian branch of the Party far more electorally appealing - this was reflected at the 1972 Federal elections²⁵ and helped to sweep the Labor Party under Whitlam into power.

24 Walter, J., The Leader, pg. 28.

25 Oakes, L., The Making of An Australian Prime Minister, pg. 26.

When Whitlam adopted the same 'confrontationist' line against the Federal Executive over their decision to reject the policy of State aid for private schools he was very nearly expelled from the Party. Whitlam had long been a supporter of State aid which was revealing of his right-wing Labor attitude. Outraged by the decision of the Federal Executive he publicly condemned as 'witless' the Labor members who made it and followed up with the statement of how he had been destined for the leadership of the Party. The Federal Executive acted swiftly and charged Whitlam with 'gross disloyalty', they convened a special meeting to hear the charge and decide on whether Whitlam should be expelled. It is argued that if it was not for his tireless and successful campaigning for the Queensland Federal seat of Dawson at a by-election held there just before the hearing he would have surely been expelled. Out of gratitude and also, no doubt, impressed by Whitlam's vote winning ability the support of Queensland's delegates to the Federal Executive at the hearing saved him.²⁶ Later that same year, 1966, the Federal Executive changed its position on State aid leaving it to the discretion of Labor parliamentarians.

On February 1967, Whitlam proved that he had recovered from his close call over the State aid issue when he was elected to the leadership of the Party by caucus. Calwell had retired from the leadership after the disastrous defeat for the Labor Party in the federal elections in late 1966 after which it was "left with only forty-one members in a House of one hundred and twenty-four."²⁷ Re-vitalised by being given the leadership Whitlam continued his drive to reform the Party structure. His aim seems

26 see Ibid, pg. 58 and Walter, J., op. cit., pg. 28.
27 Oakes, L., and Solomon, D., op. cit., pg. 12.

to have been to wipe out once and for all the stigma of the '36 faceless men'. At the 1967 Australian Labor Party Conference he successfully gained enough support for full representation, with voting rights, for the parliamentary leadership on the A.L.P. Conference and the Federal Executive. Token resistance was offered by the left-wing faction who tried successfully to counter the influence of Whitlam and Barndard (Deputy Leader), who were considered right-wingers, by moving to grant representation and voting rights to the Party's leaders in the Senate who were old style left-wingers, Lionel Murphy and Sam Cohen. However, as Whitlam says, "It may have achieved its immediate factional purpose but it did enshrine the essential principle."²⁸ In August 1969 at the A.L.P. Federal Conference in Melbourne, Mick Young, recently elected Federal A.L.P. secretary, helped Whitlam to further break the stigma of the '36 faceless men' by opening the Conference up completely to the media and the public, driving "home the point that the party had nothing to hide."²⁹

After the 1963 elections Whitlam resorted to making offensive remarks against Calwell in order to replace him as leader. He took up a clearly 'oppositional' line on the matter revealing that he was both impatient and ambitious. He also took up the same 'confrontationist' line when seeking to reform the Party structure, though eventually getting his way he came very close to being thrown out of the Party for his outspoken criticisms. After being elected leader of the Party following the humiliating loss of Labor at the Federal elections of 1966 he stepped up his efforts for reforming the Party with some success at the Adelaide Conference of the

28 Whitlam, G., The Whitlam Government, pg. 7.

29 Oakes, L., and Solomon, D., op. cit., pg. 21.

A.L.P. in 1967. However, he again resorted to the 'confrontationalist' style of settling disputes in 1968 and came close to losing his leadership over the Party when a meeting of the Federal Executive refused to admit a Tasmanian delegate, Brian Harradine, from attending presumably because he was a right-winger and was ~~retained~~^{certain} to vote with Whitlam. Whitlam attempted to place pressure on the Executive to back down by resigning his leadership and recontesting it expecting to be given an almost unanimous vote of confidence in caucus, this nearly backfired when Jim Cairns, considered a left-winger, decided to run against him and came within only 6 votes of topping him from the leadership. Thus, Whitlam put himself at great risk in adopting a 'confrontationalist' attitude to what he perceived as obstacles but for a man who had made it so far in the A.L.P. on ability alone he had very little else to utilise,

Whitlam essentially made his way on ability alone. He was not particularly liked, had no cronies and had little knowledge of machine politics, but his attributes were obvious.³⁰

Whitlam said in an interview on the eve of the 1972 federal election of his method of 'confrontation' in dealing with disputes that, "when you are faced with an impasse you have got to crash through or you have got to crash."³¹ Nevertheless, it seems that Whitlam who never possessed any real factional backing in the Labor Party saw himself as his best asset and hoped that others in the Party also saw him as a valuable possession and would back down to him when risked with losing him. This turned out to be right, even if narrowly at times, for at crucial times he gained the support

30 Walter, J., The Leader, pg. 36.

31 in Oakes, L., and Solomon, D., op. cit., pg. 58.

of those who were greatly impressed by his abilities - for example, the intervention of the Queensland delegates, which saved him from expulsion in 1966.

Certainly Whitlam's most successful attempts to reform the Party structure by making it more representative of Labor's parliamentarians at the decision-making Conference and Executive levels increased its electoral chances. Successful public relations exercises such as the opening of the 1969 A.L.P. Federal Conference to the public by full media access also went a long way to destroying the stigma of the '36 faceless men' attached to the Labor Party ever since 1963. At the Federal elections in late 1969 the Labor Party made up considerable ground after its 1966 debacle and it can be assumed that the changes in the Party Structure initiated mainly by Whitlam had some effect, the Australian Labor Party gained 18 seats in 1969.

After 1969 it was the consolidation into practical policies of Whitlam's ideas for new policies to be placed on the national political agenda and their overwhelming endorsement at the 1971 Federal A.L.P. Conference that improved Labor's public standing. The creation of a new and more moderate Victorian branch of the Party in 1970 and the official visit by an A.L.P. delegation led by Whitlam to China which was seen as a 'ground-breaking' step in international relations by the Opposition Leader also helped to boost Labor's electoral chances at the Federal election due in December 1972. However, it was his formulation of new ideas for policy that was probably the most significant of these factors,

His period of opposition leadership, from 1967 to 1972, was marked by an extraordinary generation of policy. This was again a result of hard work and application - he had more and better ideas than anybody else.³²

Although he had the help of a competent, innovative and imaginative personal staff and relied on academics and professionals such as teachers, professors, scientists and engineers to translate his ideas into workable and 'implementable' schemes³³, he is general^{ly} credited with the original idea^{of} genesis of the new policies being proposed. Thus, Whitlam gained a reputation as a visionary. The new policies ranged over a wide area but usually involved massive Federal government sponsorship of new health and education programmes and federal government initiated projects of urban development and urban upgrading.

The Fall of the Whitlam Government

On 2 December 1972 the Australian Labor Party finally won office after twenty three years of playing the Opposition role in Australian politics. Their leader, Gough Whitlam, was seen by many as the man who had made it all possible, at long last the Labor Party could form a government. The result of the elections had given the Labor Party a majority of nine seats over the conservative parties. The election campaign had been a triumph displaying both Whitlam's considerable charisma and public speaking ability developed from his days of debating at University to more recent victories as Opposition Leader in the House of Representatives where he clearly out-

32 Walter, J., op. cit., pg. 30.

33 See Ibid, pg. 31-33.

matched McMahon - Liberal Party leader and Prime Minister of Australia at the time. As Prime Minister, Whitlam continued to dominate in parliament in debates with the newly elected leader of the Liberal Party and thus opposition Leader, Bill Snedden.

However, despite the enthusiasm of Labor's first electoral win at federal level for twenty three years, problems soon began to surface. The Whitlam Government had been elected to office as a reforming government in the House of Representatives but the conservative parties had a majority in the Senate which held over^{from} the 1970 Senate elections. In May 1974 Whitlam felt compelled to call an early election for the House of Representatives and the Senate to break the hold the latter was beginning to tighten over the former and to have the former re-confirmed by the Australian people. In April 1974 the Senate had "twice rejected 10 Bills, and rejected nine other Bills. The twice-rejected Bills included four referendum Bills for the alteration of the Constitution, three electoral Bills, two health insurance Bills and a resources Bill."³⁴ In the House of Representatives Labor held on to a majority of five seats, they had only managed, however, to secure an equal number of Senators to those of the Liberal and Country Parties - 2 independent Senators were also returned, one of them giving his allegiance to the conservative parties the other remaining independent and who, thankfully for Labor's sake, was opposed to the use of the Senate for blocking supply to the Government, he was Steele Hall. Thus, all the double dissolution of parliament in 1974 had gained for the Whitlam Government was a slightly reduced majority in the House and a deadlocked Senate.

34 Whitlam, G., The Whitlam Government, pg. 730.

However, the Whitlam Government could still count on the passage of Supply Bills because any motion in the Senate to block supply needed a majority of one and since at worst for the Labor Party the vote would be equal, under Senate rules, this counted as a rejection of the motion. Reid argues that Labor could have won a majority in the Senate if Whitlam had acknowledged the importance of rural votes in winning Senate places at the 1974 elections³⁵. It is argued that Whitlam pre-occupied himself with vote-winning policies for the cities and neglected rural policy - for example Whitlam himself took the decision to scrap the subsidy on superphosphate which was proposed at the 1973 A.L.P. Federal Conference. This was not the only unpopular decision taken by the Whitlam Government, in July 1973 they decided to cut the tariff on imports, in order to combat rising inflation, by 25 percent. This measure was roundly criticised by the trade union movement but it was not until after the 1974 elections that imports began to flood the Australian market and the Australian industries - manufacturing, textile, etc. unable to compete with exports without adequate tariff protection were forced to lay off workers that they became really hostile. The Bass by-election result of 28 June 1975 demonstrates quite clearly how unpopular this decision was. The seat had been safely held for many years by Lance Barnard, who had warned Whitlam of the rising unemployment there in the textile industry due to the tariff cut but Whitlam refused his advice to consider an increase in the tariff, when he retired and a federal by-election was held for the seat the Liberal Party won it with a swing against the Labor Party of 17 percent.

35 Reid, A., The Whitlam Venture, pg. 89.

However, on the surface, nothing was more controversial than Whitlam's decision to give his Minister for Minerals and Energy, Xavier Connor, written approval to seek loans to the amount of four thousand million dollars from unspecified sources using, at best, an unknown commodities broker, Tirath ^{Khemlani} ~~Khematin~~, in December 1974. Whitlam had been warned by his Treasurer, Frank Crean, against it in October and ^{was} backed up by the Head of the Treasury Department. Don Willesee, who as the recently appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs also expressed his opposition to any attempt to raise loans from Arab sources - it was presumed that such a large amount of money could only come from these.³⁶ As was becoming usual with him, Whitlam disregarded the advice of his associates and procured the authority for Connor to proceed. This decision brought untold embarrassment for the Whitlam Government when its details were leaked to the Opposition. Whitlam then revoked Connor's authority on May 20, 1975 but in October it was revealed by Khemlani that Connor continued negotiations with him after the May 20 deadline. Whitlam had declared to the House that all negotiations had been terminated on May 20 and the flare-up in October meant that Whitlam had, though unknowingly, misled the parliament. Connor resigned, but the damage had been done because the next day the Opposition decided to block the Government's Budget with its dubiously gained majority in the Senate in an attempt to force Whitlam into calling another election.

Only two days after the Bass by-election disaster the Labor Party suffered another blow when on 30 June one of its Queensland Senators, Bertie Milliner, died, an event which would upset the delicate balance of the

36 Ibid, pg. 8-12.

Senate which was elected at the 1974 elections. Queensland's conservative Premier, Joh Bjelke Petersen, refused to accept Labor's nominee to replace Milliner, thus breaking with established political convention, and instead offered a replacement who claimed to support the Labor Party but was anti-Whitlam and made it clear that he would vote against the Whitlam Government. However, a High Court injunction prevented^{ed} Albert Field from taking his place in the Senate and voting against the Government. Nevertheless, with Milliner's position unable to be properly filled while the matter was with the High court his vacancy still counted as a majority for the Opposition in the Senate.

On 15 October 1975 the Opposition led by Malcolm Fraser announced its intention to use its dubious Senate majority to block the recently brought down Federal Budget which was prepared by the new Treasurer, Bill Hayden, and widely regarded as a sensible and responsible budget³⁷. The tactic was not to reject the Budget but keep deferring it until the Government gave in to calling a Federal election which because of the unpopularity of the Government, amply demonstrated by the Bass by-election result, they expected to win. However, Whitlam, probably sensing that his Government would surely lose an election at the time, claimed that he would never give in to the Opposition. Whitlam argued that the House of Representatives was the 'people's House' and would not be dictated to by the Senate.³⁸ The stand-off between the Government and the Opposition continued to 11 November 1975 when it was abruptly broken by the Governor-General, Sir John Kerr, who withdrew the commission of Whitlam and his Government.

37 Oakes, L., Crash through or Crash: The Unmaking of a Prime Minister, pg 126-127.

38 Ibid, p 7.

Before the intervention of Kerr it appeared that the Opposition would have to back down as public opinion was starting to express sympathy for the Government.³⁹ However, Kerr had consulted with Fraser, which was quite extraordinary in itself as a Governor-General's adviser should be the Prime Minister, and was convinced by him that the Opposition would not back down. Kerr, without the consent of Whitlam who as Prime Minister was his chief adviser under the Constitution and therefore rather unconstitutionally, sought the legal advice of the Chief Justice of Australia, Sir Garfield Barwick, on the crisis who informed him that the Senate has the right to block supply and that a Government which cannot ensure supply should resign or call an election and that if they fail to do so it is within the Governor-General's powers under the Constitution to withdraw their Commission. Kerr followed this advice almost to the letter, his official reason for sacking the Whitlam Government was that Whitlam could not ensure supply and refused to resign or call an election. After sacking Whitlam, Kerr appointed Fraser as care-taker Prime-Minister on the assurance that he pass the Budget in the Senate and call for an election of both Houses as soon as possible, which he fulfilled.

However, many were uneasy about the rightness of Kerr's decision. Whitlam argues that the crisis was political and not constitutional and that Kerr's actions were also political because he based his decision not on a breach of the Constitution but on his reading of the political situation⁴⁰ - he had determined that the Opposition ^{would} ~~could~~ not back down and that supply could not be passed ^{by} ~~to~~ the Government. Whitlam had also made an

39 Ibid, pg. 3.

40 Whitlam, G., The Truth of the Matter.

appointment with Kerr earlier on 11 November about calling a half-senate election for December 13, which given the strong feeling emerging against the Opposition's tactics may have broken the deadlock before the end of the year and therefore before money ran out for the Government. Also, it is important to remember that the Senate never took a vote to pass or reject the Budget but just to defer it and that it would have taken only one Opposition Senator to cross the floor and vote with the Labor Party to destroy the Opposition's tactics and only two Opposition Senators to pass the Budget. Certainly there was some doubts in many minds that Kerr's intervention was premature.

Nevertheless, "Despite public consternation over the Governor-General's action, the A.L.P. failures of performance in the past year weighed heavily against sympathy for Whitlam. On 13 December, the conservative coalition obtained a massive electoral victory and Fraser became Prime Minister."⁴¹ It seemed that although the public at large supported the Government during the crisis with the Senate, they nevertheless resented the turmoil and political instability of 1975 and therefore voted overwhelmingly for a conservative government at the post-dismissal elections of 13 December 1975. Although Labor Party rallies during the election campaign produced the biggest crowds in Labor Party History⁴², the result of the election proved that the majority of the electorate had become disaffected with the Whitlam Government. They had probably had had enough controversy which the Whitlam Government was becoming continually embroiled in. The economic downturn in the world economy

41 Walter, J., The Leader, pg. 262.

42 McKinlay, B., The A.L.P. A Short History, pg. 153.

was crucial and the economic policies of the Whitlam Government with the exception of the Hayden budget, which came too late and could not be passed by the Whitlam Government, were widely unpopular. The unorthodox loan-raising activities of the Whitlam Government seriously scandalised the credibility of it and must have also been a factor in the elections.

The attempts to borrow huge petro-dollar sums through shadowy intermediaries had raised the suspicion in the minds of some voters that scandal was involved, and confirmed others in the belief that the Whitlam Ministry was a bunch of naive amateurs.⁴³

The result of the December 197⁵~~8~~ federal elections was the most disastrous in the history of the Australian Labor Party, worse than even 1966, it managed to win only 36 seats to the Conservative Parties' 91 seats in the House of Representatives and the Senate was also lost to the Conservative parties who gained a comfortable majority.

Chapter 3 Lang and Whitlam: A Comparison

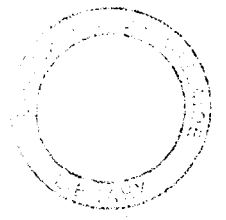
Whitlam's background ~~different~~^{different} greatly from that of Lang and from most Labor politicians in general up until the 1960's. Whitlam came from a wealthy and successful middle class family whereas Lang was raised in relative poverty. However, Lang was soon able because of his grasp of the real-estate business to make himself a wealthy man before entering the Parliament of New South Wales in 1913. Lang had been able to fit in only a few years of formal schooling as a boy, but like most Labor politicians became quite self-educated through personal study. On the other hand, Whitlam, free of financial constraints, had a full formal education mostly at private schools and then went on to University where he developed and honed his brilliant intellect which was to take him to the Prime Ministership of Australia in 1972. Before he entered the federal parliament, Whitlam was a successful lawyer who had his own practice. Born only 40 years apart, an era in which little changed socio-economically, Lang and Whitlam had very different backgrounds but they held in common the fact that they were both wealthy when they entered parliament.

When Lang joined the Australian Labor Party (A.L.P.) in 1901 he had just begun to enjoy financial security at long last but it was not unusual for a man of his background to join the A.L.P. for it might be expected of him to retain some sympathy for the low-income earners and underprivileged that he had grown up with. For a man of Whitlam's relatively care-free background it was certainly less expected that he join the A.L.P. His influences in joining the A.L.P. may have been his parents, whom although

wealthy and successful preached tolerance, social equality and justice. However, the immediate cause for his joining the A.L.P. was concern over the defeat of a referendum sponsored by a Labor Government to expand federal power which was opposed by the conservative parties. Whitlam saw the actions of the conservative parties as 'cynical' and 'reactionary' and decided to join the A.L.P. as a result.

Lang had developed a strong and forceful personality to match his physical appearance - 6 foot 4 inches tall, broad shouldered and weighing ^{ing} 101 kilograms. He used his awesome physical build to great advantage but developed also a reputation for tireless campaign work and organisation. He was not really an 'ideas-man' but could think and act logically. His rapid rise in the local labor leagues were due to these factors, his forceful personality backed up by his physical strength probably being the most influential. When Whitlam joined the Labor leagues he was initially received with some suspicion as he was a 'middle-class man in a predominantly working-class Party.' But he quickly gained success as he developed the respect of branch members with his dedication and hard work in campaigning and organising, and thus differed little from Lang in this respect. Whitlam too was tall - also 6 foot 4 inches, and broad shouldered but like Lang could not appear 'menacing'. But the main ingredient of Whitlam's success at local Labor branch level, as was the case in general in regard to his political career, was his sheer intellectual ability which cannot really be said of Lang.

Lang's rise within the Labor caucus was due in large part to clever factional manoeuvring at the 1923 State Labor Conference. Up until 1923 Lang had had no dealings with trade unions but his organisation of their support for Dooley, then leader of the Party, against the Australian workers Union who dominated the State Executive increased his standing in caucus and when Dooley decided to resign, he became the favourite to replace him. However, after being elected leader of the New South Wales Labor Party in 1923 he quickly became unpopular amongst a considerable section of the caucus who ~~resented~~^{resented} his 'secretive' ways and 'domineering' style of leadership. Lang narrowly survived two leadership challenges from caucus, in 1924, by a solitary vote after a second ballot, and in 1926 only because A.L.P. rules in the event of a tie, which was the result ~~of~~^{on} this occasion, decided in favour of the leader. After the narrowness of his 1924 challenge, Lang sought a firmer alliance with the trade unions he had organised in 1923. These are strong arguments that he included in this alliance the Trades and Labor Council of New South Wales, which was a relatively militant left-wing organisation whose secretary, Jock ~~Gordon~~^{Garden}, was a renowned communist. Because in 1923 he had helped to expel the Communists from the Labor Party, his increasing relations with ~~Gordon~~^{Garden} after 1925 are claimed to demonstrate how ambitious and unscrupulous Lang could be to retain his leadership. Certainly Lang's power base was his support from the industrial unions, they helped him to get the numbers to tie the vote in the 1926 caucus challenge and later confirmed him in the leadership beyond caucus control and granted him almost dictatorial powers over the Party at a specially convened A.L.P. Conference, without this factional backing Lang's considerable unpopularity in caucus may have overtaken him.



Whitlam had no such help. Like Lang his early background had left him unacquainted with the trade union movement, but unlike Lang he never sought to win their factional support in the Labor Party. Whitlam made his way up the caucus ladder on his ability alone. When he began his parliamentary career he immediately impressed his parliamentary colleagues with his tireless preparation before debates in the House, he was well informed and could always make incisive comment, and criticism against the Menzies Government. He also developed into a great speaker in the House. He was never personally liked to any great degree in caucus but they developed a respect for his abilities and were prepared to promote him for the good of the Party. Like Lang, Whitlam was a loner and often acted without consulting caucus or listening to the advice of colleagues, but unlike in Lang's case they did little more than complain. Though he could be arrogant, caucus respected his immense intellectual capabilities and after he had led them to office in 1972 to form the first Labor government in twenty three years he no doubt gained from them even deeper respect and loyalty.

Lang's power base - the industrial unions, operated mainly to keep him in the leadership of the Party. In return, Lang pushed through industrial legislation when he became Premier of New South Wales in 1925 and again in 1930. Whitlam, who was considered a ^{right-winger} ~~right-wing~~ in Labor circles received support from moderate elements in the Party but in real terms had no factional support to wield. Whereas Lang could get his way in the New South Wales Labor Party as long as he continued to uphold the aims of the industrial unions, when Whitlam decided to reform the Party structure to make the Federal Labor Party more electorally appealing he had to put

himself on the line and hope that his opposition backed ^{down} ~~him~~. Whitlam adopted a 'confrontationalist' line on the matter of reform and although he survived and got his way in the end he very nearly didn't at times. For example, his outspoken criticism of the Federal Executive's stance on the State-aid issue in 1966 almost led to his expulsion from the Party which was only ^{averted} ~~averted~~ by the intervention of Queensland delegates to the Federal Executive who on the behalf of the Queensland branch which had only lately realised his talents as a campaigner and vote-winner at a recent by-election there, were directed to do everything to save him.

^{It} ~~It~~ is certainly hard to imagine the Labor Party winning the 1972 Federal elections without the changes Whitlam made to the Party and his own charismatic leadership of it. The reforms of the Party's structure and the generation of new ideas for new and innovative policy are attributed mainly to Whitlam. His vigorous leadership not only made his Party more electorally appealing but also gave it an image of modernity, of reform, of fresh ideas, and visionary leadership. Whitlam, unlike Lang, was an 'ideas-man'.

The Lang Government of 1925 to 1927 passed many industrial Bills and social welfare Bills which at the time were considered quite 'radical' - e.g. the 44 hour week, compulsory workers compensation, widows pensions and child endowment. Although the ideas for these Bills didn't originate with Lang, he is nevertheless given credit for ^{boldly} ~~boldly~~ initiating them. Lang too adopted a 'confrontationist' line at times, but it was more particularly ^{reserved} ~~reserved~~ for the Legislative Council, the upper house, when it tried to block his legislation in early 1926. Lang retaliated against the Legislative

Council by introducing the controversial Legislative Council Abolition Bill, which was passed by the Legislative Assembly, the Lower house where the Lang Government had a majority, but was predictably rejected by the Legislative Council where the conservatives were in the majority. Voted out of office in 1927 as a 'radical', Lang was re-elected as Premier in November 1930 in the midst of the Great Economic Depression and enhanced his reputation as a 'radical'. His policy of repudiating New South Wales' interest payments to British bondholders was certainly controversial, especially since the Federal ^{Government} had rejected such a course.

The Whitlam Government's policies were never considered as radical as Lang's policies but this must be seen largely as a sign of the times. Whitlam's policies were mostly seen as much needed reform initiatives, the increased Federal Government expenditure proposed by the Whitlam Government for urban development, education, health, social welfare payments and Aboriginal services were far from unpopular. It was the Whitlam Government's economic policies that caused them unpopularity - the 25 percent tariff cut aimed at reducing inflation led to greater unemployment in Australian industries and therefore to hostility from the working class, while the scrapping of the Federal Government subsidy on superphosphate led to considerable resentment in rural areas. Probably the most disastrous decision made by Whitlam was to give his Minister for Mineral and Energy a loan authority to seek four thousand million dollars, through unofficial and largely unknown intermediaries, which would come most likely from Arab sources. When it was revealed in parliament by the Opposition it became a major embarrassment to the Whitlam Government and damaging to its credibility. When it was further revealed in September

1975 that Connor continued negotiations for the loan after Whitlam had revoked the loan authority in May, the whole controversy was revived. It was in reaction to these events, which the opposition described as 'extraordinary', that the Opposition decided to use its dubiously gained Senate majority to block supply to the Government and force it to call early elections. Thus, the 'Loans Affair' scandalised the Whitlam Government and gave the Opposition a justification for using the Senate to block supply in order to force an early election.

Both Lang and Whitlam were dismissed from public office by representatives of the British Crown utilising special powers given to them under the Australian Constitution. However, the decision of Governor Game to sack Lang has never been disputed in legal terms, while there has been considerable argument about the correctness or rightness of Governor-General Kerr's decision to sack Whitlam.¹ Game had dismissed Lang for breaking the law by commanding civil servants to disobey a Federal Government Proclamation. Kerr sacked Whitlam on the advice of the Chief Justice that the Senate had the right to block supply and that a Government which could not ensure supply should resign or call an election. Since Whitlam refused to resign or call an election and Kerr had determined that the opposition would not back down he sacked Whitlam because he could not ensure supply. However, it was not a political certainty that the Opposition Senators would have held ~~firm~~^{firm}, after all, it would have only taken one Opposition Senator to cross the floor and vote

1 Kerr's decision has been disputed on legal grounds by University Law Professors - see Whitlam, G., The Truth of the Matter, pg. 124-128.

with the Government to reject the Opposition's tactics, it would have taken only two senators from the Opposition to ensure supply. Thus, Kerr's decision to sack Whitlam and his Government was based heavily on his own interpretation of political events to come and thus was filled with uncertainty. Certainly Kerr had the power under the Constitution to dismiss Whitlam but there are doubts on whether he was justified in exercising that right. The Lang dismissal was more clear cut, Game had based his decision on a breach of the law.

Certainly Lang evoked greater conservative outrage than Whitlam. But it must be taken into account that fear of communism was far greater in Lang's time and that the Great Depression was conducive to irrational and paranoid behavior. Conservative reaction to Lang had its most extreme manifestation in the formation of the paramilitary New ^{Guard} ~~Quara~~ in 1931, which it was revealed had plans to overthrow Lang and his Government. There has been an interpretation of the political events of 1975 that the actions of Kerr, the Chief Justice - Sir Garfield Barwick, and those of the Fraser-led Opposition represented a concerted campaign by the Australian establishment to remove the Whitlam Government from office. It has even been asserted that the United States' Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.) played a role in the bringing down of the Whitlam Government.² Nevertheless, on the surface, it seemed that Lang enraged conservatives more than Whitlam.

2 See McKinlay, B., The A.L.P., A Short History, pg. 151.

Both Lang and Whitlam were convincingly defeated by conservative parties at their post-dismissal elections, probably demonstrating that they had alienated the majority of the electorate by their 'radical' and/or controversial political gyrations. Lang's determination to defy the authority of the Federal Government on economic matters and in Whitlam's case it was his unpopular economic policies and the scandal of the 'Loans Affair', turned the majority of the electorate against them. However, they both retained the sympathy and support of large sections of the Labor movement after their dismissals. Although they possessed quite different personalities, they had in common a demonstrated ability to win the hearts of many of their supporters and retain their loyalty.

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