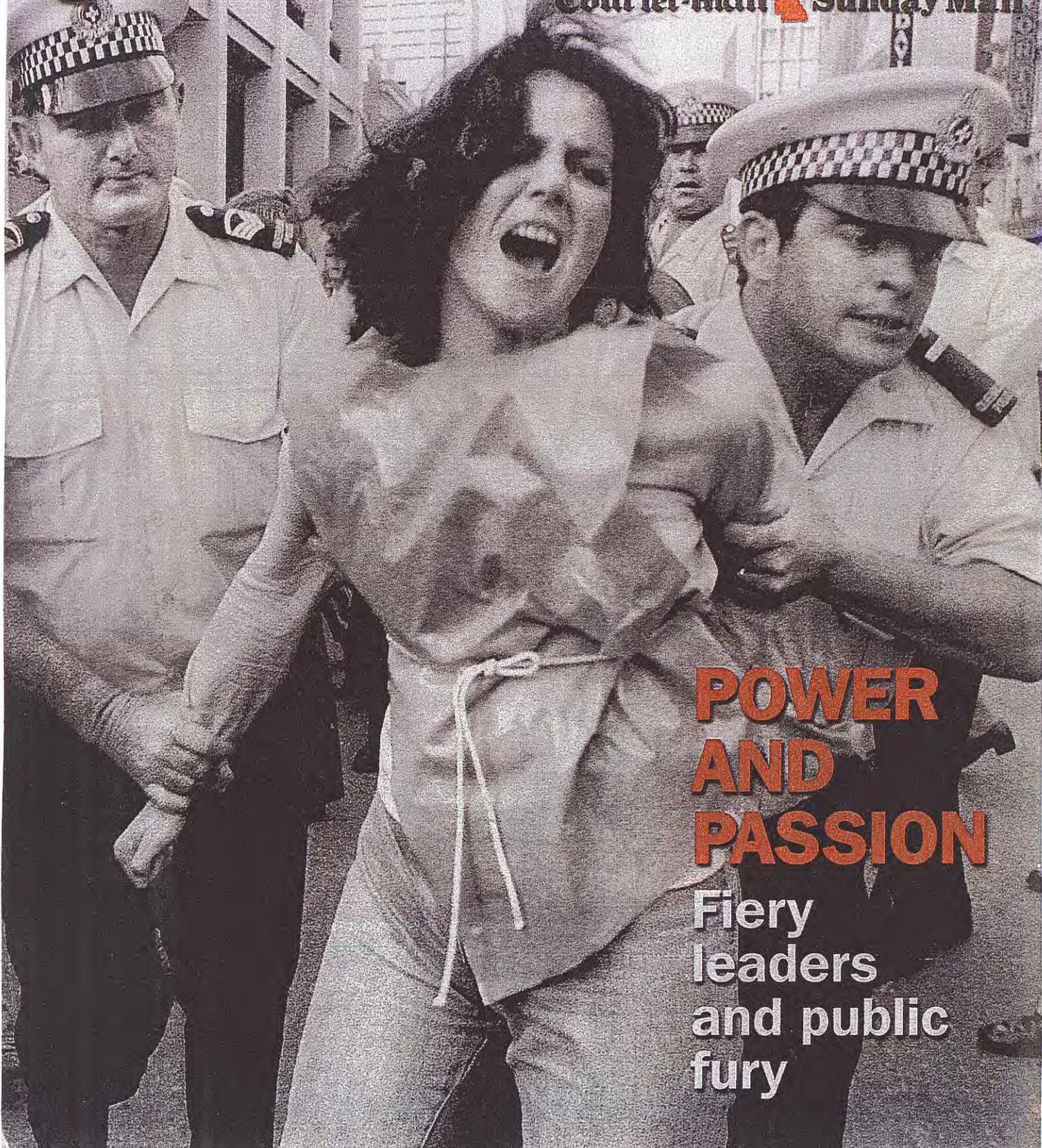


# Our Queensland

BOOK 3

Courier-Mail  Sunday Mail



**POWER  
AND  
PASSION**

Fiery  
leaders  
and public  
fury



» How different would Queensland have been if Jack Pizzey, who had a university degree and the experience of life gained by serving as a World War II artillery officer, had not died in August 1968? For with his death, Johannes Bjelke-Petersen became premier. Bjelke-Petersen seemed an

unlikely choice. He was not a good public speaker and, even as a youngish backbencher, he was a problem for the party whips. His first cabinet portfolio was Works. It was ideal, because bridges, roads, schools, police stations – all the great items of state government spending – could be dispensed to electorates. And Bjelke-Petersen never forgot the backbenchers concerned owed him a favour. In 1968, those favours were called in. Bjelke-Petersen's premiership was nearly very

short. The coalition was re-elected in 1969 only because voters did not want a dull and limited Labor Party led by a dull and limited Jack Houston, about whom the most exciting thing to be said was that he judged dog shows. Queenslanders had not warmed, either, to Bjelke-Petersen, a curious man with a convoluted speaking style, a difficult name and the reputation of being – not to put too fine a point on it – a wowser and a Bible basher. Late in October 1970, Bjelke-Petersen was in

» **1920** Disquiet over Labor policies including bids to abolish upper house; Labor returned with reduced majority.  
 > Shipping disputes delay supplies of fuel, machinery parts and explosives to Cloncurry

copper fields; threaten viability of industry.  
 > Australian Workers Union gains 44-hour week in Qld; throughout state by 1925; 40-hour week by 1948.  
 > Rebel members of opposition Nationalists form Country Party.



without an upper house when Labor majority in Legislative Council votes to end its own existence.

» **1922** Death of George Silas Curtis, left, Rockhampton's martyr to separation movement.  
 » **1923** Qld introduces Australia's first jury service for women.  
 » **1925** William McCormack's Labor government elected amidst

state-wide industrial turmoil (to 1929).  
 > Qld conservatives merge as Country and Progressive National Party (to 1936).  
 » **1927** Striking sugar cane worker shot dead at Innisfail; railway workers strike in sympathy.  
 » **1929** Labor loses



government for three Depression years; Country National Party leader Arthur Moore is premier.  
 > Schoolteacher Irene Longman, left, first woman in Qld parliament as Progressive National member for Bulimba.  
 » **1930** Royal commission into sale of Mungana



GRAHAM HUTTON



*In 1969, Queenslanders had not warmed to Bjelke-Petersen, a curious man with a convoluted speaking style, a difficult name and the reputation of being a wowser.*

rise & FALL

Left: Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen holds court in his Parliament House bedroom for students from Kingaroy State High School, in the heart of his electorate, on a 1969 tour of the building.

Below left: The former premier in 1991 after a jury, led by a National Party member, failed to reach agreement on whether Sir Joh had perjured himself at the Fitzgerald inquiry.

trouble with his party. The Comalco share issue and a decision not to mine the coloured sands of Cooloola, north of Noosa, had undermined public confidence in the government. Bjelke-Petersen's backbenchers planned to replace him with Mines Minister Ron Camm. But the plotters, led by speaker David Nicholson – no nonsense in the Queensland Legislative Assembly about the speaker being above politics – made a fatal mistake. Four of them, including Nicholson and the colourful Russ

Hinze, went to Bjelke-Petersen and told him they planned to move against him the next day. They thought they had the numbers: 16 to 10. They might have had – then. By the next morning, Bjelke-Petersen had narrowed the margin. When the vote was taken, he claimed he had the proxy vote of minister Neville Hewitt, who was overseas. That produced a tie: 13 votes apiece. Bjelke-Petersen then voted for himself. As it happened, he didn't have Hewitt's proxy. The wily premier had been unable to contact his minister and thought that, if he could not contact Hewitt, neither could his opponents.

No Queensland politician has aroused such passions as Joh Bjelke-Petersen. Even last year, when he celebrated his 90th birthday, he was praised and reviled. But from 1970, when he prevailed in the party room, until 1987, Bjelke-Petersen dominated Queensland politics and played no small part in the destruction of a federal Labor government.

The master of mangled syntax, Bjelke-Petersen actually endeared himself to taciturn Queenslanders with his verbal eccentricity. Sometimes, his

statements verged on self-parody. For example, Bjelke-Petersen on finance: "Australia is bankrupt. It is even worse than that." Or on the worker: "The 40-hour week has given the opportunity to many to while away their time in hotels." Or, on fighting Labor: "My goodness, there's a deep responsibility."

\* His first great political success came less than a year after his party challenge. In the winter of 1971, Australia hosted a tour by the South African rugby team, the Springboks. The team, all white and overwhelmingly Afrikaner, was certain to attract protesters against apartheid. At the time, the rugby headquarters at Ballymore was largely insecure; police commissioner Ray Whitrod realised his men could not stop protesters getting into the ground and disrupting the two matches planned for Ballymore, against Queensland and Australia.

Bjelke-Petersen's response was to invoke a state of emergency, just as Hanlon and Gair had done before him. This time, however, the object was not the unionists but "long-haired protesters". Under the state of emergency, police powers were extended and the RNA Showground oval, with its better security, was acquired for the games. Bjelke-Petersen was opposed in cabinet, but his view prevailed. The state of emergency also provoked a 24-hour strike by unions and some ugly protest clashes involving an unruly and undisciplined police force. But the games went ahead. The government won two by-elections the next weekend, including a seat held by Labor for 56 years. Bjelke-Petersen had established himself successfully as a "law and order" politician.

Recently, he acknowledged that his "political stocks soared" after the Springbok tour. He was commenting on the release of cabinet and other documents showing how his government had used the police special branch to spy on citizens at the time. A former Queensland Police Union



Mines finds former Labor premiers Theodore and McCormack guilty of dishonesty; Theodore quits as federal treasurer.  
 >> 1932 Labor returns to government with William Forgan Smith as premier; holds office to 1957.

>> 1939 League of Social Justice raids Parliament House.  
 >> 1940 Brisbane fascist and communist groups declared illegal under National Security Act.  
 >> 1944 Breakaway Qld Labor Party member Tom Aikens, right, elected independent member



for Mundingburra (MLA to 1977); dubs himself "voice of the north"; his fiery oratory and outrageous remarks earn him frequent expulsions from parliament.  
 > Fred Paterson wins seat in Qld Parliament, only member of Communist Party elected in Australia.

>> 1946 Johannes Bjelke-Petersen elected to Kingaroy shire council; enters state parliament 1947.  
 > Up to 8000 meatworkers strike as industrial action escalates throughout Australia after war.  
 >> 1948 Labor premier "Anti Red" Ned Hanlon,



above, declares state of emergency after rail workers strike for 61 days over wages and neglect by Labor

governments; spreads until over 23,000 men involved; growing struggle between left and right-wing unions.  
 >> 1948 Hanlon changes electoral boundaries to protect representation in country areas.

# march to POWER

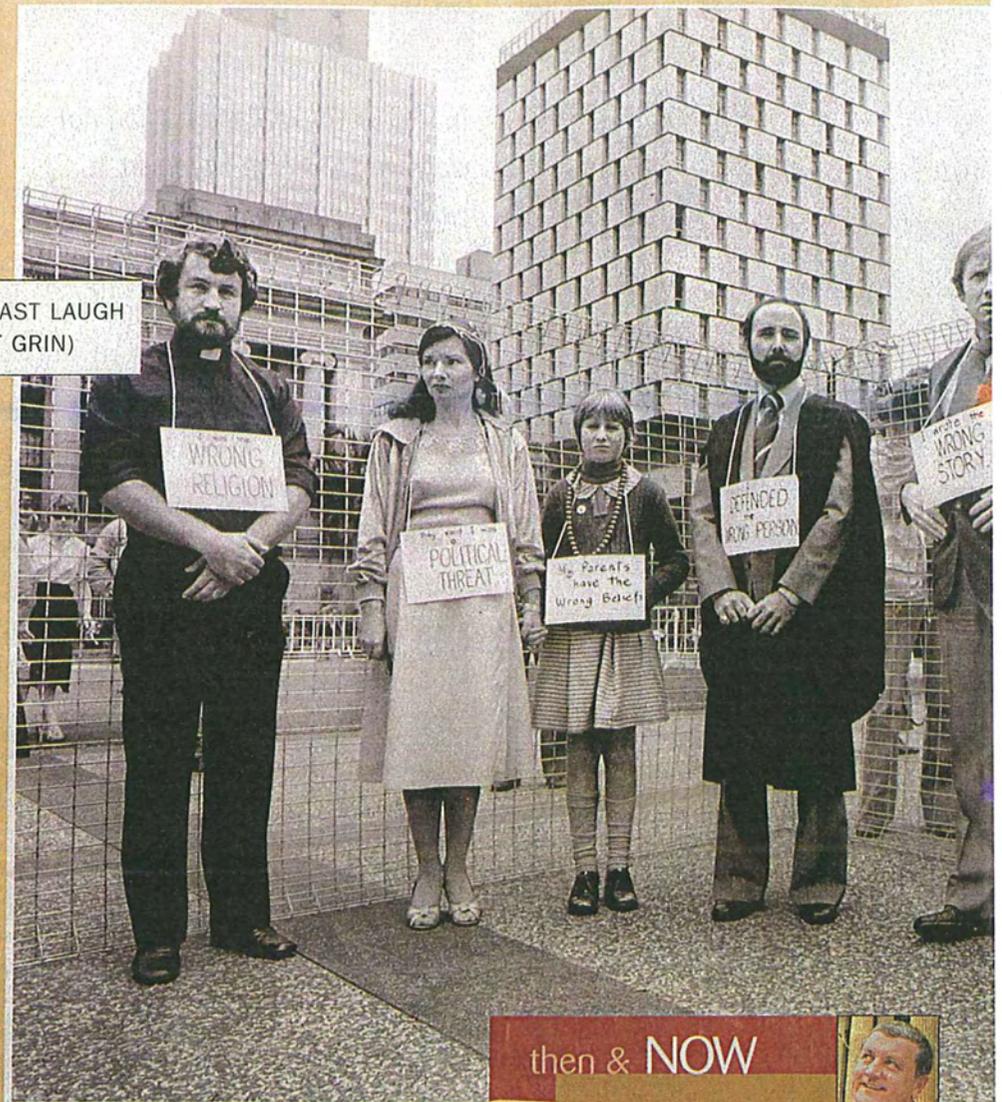
STREET MARCH PROTESTERS HAD THE LAST LAUGH  
(OR IN PETER BEATTIE'S CASE, THE LAST GRIN)

"THE day of the political street march is over," premier Bjelke-Petersen proclaimed in September 1977. "Anybody who holds a street march, spontaneous or otherwise, will know they are acting illegally. Don't bother to apply for a permit. You won't get one. That's government policy now."

Sixteen months and nearly 2000 arrests later, in the wake of an electoral setback for the National Party in the Sherwood by-election, Bjelke-Petersen quietly reversed that policy. In the meantime, the premier and his police commissioner, the compliant and crooked Terrence Murray Lewis, combined to deny Queenslanders the right to protest in a peaceful assembly. These times were marked by street battles, by opposition from the churches and even from *The Courier-Mail*, rather more conservative then than now. The protesters included Peter Beattie who in 1971, as a young university student, had been whacked over the head by an over-zealous policeman during the Springbok tour. Another was a fiery young priest named James Soorley, later to swap clerical cloth for lord mayoral robes. Recently Premier Beattie recalled the times. "I got worked over," he said. "It was a dark time in Queensland's history. As someone who was beaten up for his trouble, I am delighted that we now have a free and open position on peaceful protests." He said he was proud to be involved in the demonstrations.

The subject of the protest didn't matter then – uranium mining, apartheid, even the street march ban itself – all were banned. For Bjelke-Petersen, it was the perfect law-and-order issue. When it was dropped, quietly, it was because the Nationals realised they would have to modify their stance on such issues to win seats in Brisbane.

But the premier had another election winner,



targeting the unions after strikes by power workers that left Queenslanders without power, hot and annoyed. Electrical Trade Union members battled the then generating board, SEQEB, over plans to introduce private contractors. Cabinet ordered the sacking of the power workers under state of emergency provisions. On February 11, 1985, SEQEB sacked 1000 workers and said the government was handling the dispute. Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen made no secret of his objective. He was, he said, "out to get the unions".

Finally the unions gave in, the state of emergency was lifted early in March and Bjelke-Petersen had won. But at enormous cost: one contemporary estimate suggested total losses had been over \$100 million.

## then & NOW

Above: Power cell . . . Amnesty International demonstrators in a symbolic "cell" in King George Square in October 1980, from left; Father Jim Soorley, Rosemary Kyburz (then Liberal MLA for Salisbury), Margaret Nulty, Philip Tahminjis, journalist Hugh Lunn, Jennifer Woodhouse and then Railway Station Officers Union state secretary Peter Beattie.

Insets: Famous faces today . . . Jim Soorley, approaching his last days as Lord Mayor of Brisbane; Rosemary Kyburz, author Hugh Lunn and Premier Peter Beattie.



> Qld Liberal Party launched.  
>> **1950** Federal Crimes Act used to end Brisbane waterfront strike.  
>> **1953** Qld Labor vote soars to 53.2%; Vince Gair premier.

>> **1956** Shearers strike for months over 5% wage cut.  
> Australian Workers Union joins forces with Trades and Labor Council over Gair's failure to implement three weeks annual leave; leads to split in Labor Party in Qld.  
>> **1957** Gair expelled from

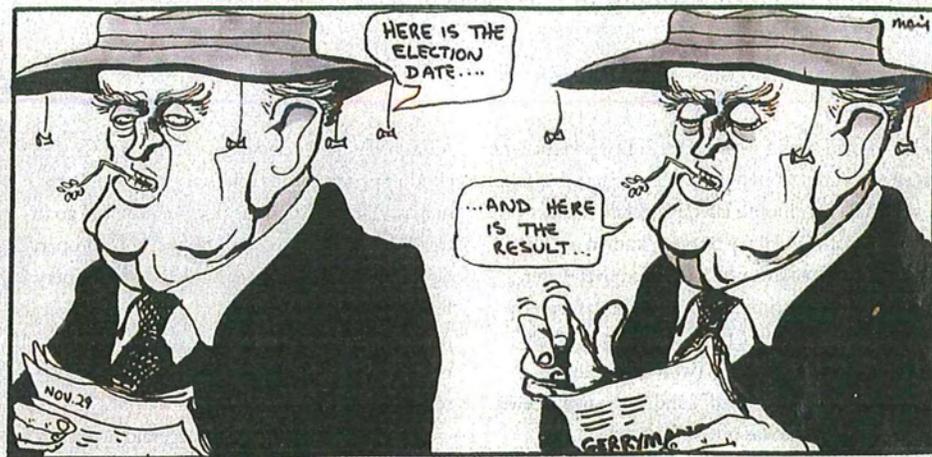
ALP; forms Qld Labor Party (later DLP).  
> Labor loses office when ALP members vote with opposition to block supply.  
> After 25 years in opposition, Country-Liberal Party coalition wins office for 32 years; Frank Nicklin premier to 1968; Labor's gerrymander reversed with

redistribution to limit the ALP's city influence.  
>> **1964** Mt Isa Mines dismisses 231 men under state of emergency law during prolonged strike, suspends operations; police given power of arrest without warrant; picketing banned by law.



>> **1965** Rosalie Bogner and Merle Thornton, left, chain themselves to public bar in Brisbane's Regatta Hotel in anti-discrimination protest.  
> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people granted right to vote in Qld elections.  
>> **1966** Anti-Vietnam War

marches lead to arrests for breaching Traffic Act (to 1972).  
>> **1967** Changes to Federal Constitution end legal discrimination against Aborigines; all states except Qld abandon discriminatory laws.  
> Police arrest 114 of 4000 in Union of Civil Liberties march in Brisbane.



Through the 70s and into the 80s, Bjelke-Petersen brutally – or brilliantly, depending on your point of view – exploited “law and order”. Independent and courageous police commissioner Ray Whitrod was forced out, replaced by Bjelke-Petersen sycophant Terrence Murray Lewis. Whitrod, knowing Lewis was probably corrupt, had exiled him to the bush; Bjelke-Petersen promoted him, forcing Whitrod’s resignation. With a compliant police commissioner, Bjelke-Petersen knew that no permits would be issued for street marches.

In the end, Lewis was to play a large part in the premier’s downfall. That, and the loopy and ambitious “Joh for PM” campaign, in which a group of disaffected conservatives, main-chance urgers and Queensland National Party schemers promoted the bizarre prospect of the elderly Bjelke-Petersen moving to federal politics and ultimately to The Lodge.

In May 1987, the ABC *Four Corners* program *The Moonlight State* was aired. Following on from reports in *The Courier-Mail*, the program alleged corruption in the Queensland police force, involving payments from brothel owners to crooked cops. The allegations were not new; they had surfaced from time to time and some news organisations had been forced to pay damages to aggrieved wallpapers who

alleged their reputations had been damaged.

This time it was different. William Gunn, an honest and thoroughly decent politician, was premier in all but name as Bjelke-Petersen stumped the country on his PM campaign. Gunn had had enough. He wanted the allegations investigated and quickly. He decided it would be better to seek the premier’s forgiveness than his permission. Ignoring a suggestion that District Court Judge Eric Pratt handle the inquiry, Gunn opted for G.E. “Tony” Fitzgerald, QC, on the advice of Ian Callinan, QC, now a High Court judge. Fitzgerald began his hearings on July 27, 1987. The Joh for PM campaign was all over – a risible result for all concerned. John Howard had lost his first election as opposition leader and Bob Hawke was back in The Lodge. Lewis was the first witness.

Not one to cop the blame, Lewis said five successive police ministers had told him to tolerate brothels in Queensland. It was a neat variation of the Nuremberg defence: Lewis was just

Above: *Courier-Mail* cartoonist Alan Moir pulled no punches as he chronicled the Joh era. The Joh scowl, the hick corked hat and the straw in the mouth were his standard symbols as he mercilessly lampooned the premier.

» president, Ron Edington, said police regarded the special branch as a tool of the Bjelke-Petersen government. “Anybody that stood for the right to demonstrate or opposed the government went in the file,” he said.

Three years after the Springbok tour, as Gough Whitlam’s federal Labor government was becoming increasingly unruly and unpopular, an election reduced Labor to 11 members in the Queensland parliament. Bjelke-Petersen’s power was unrivalled. That year, too, Bjelke-Petersen appointed political nonentity Albert Patrick Field to replace deceased Labor senator Bert Milliner. Field’s appointment enabled the Senate to block supply late in 1975, precipitating the dismissal of the Whitlam government by governor-general Sir John Kerr.

> Toowoomba’s Nell Robinson, right, first woman mayor in Qld.

» 1968  
Joh Bjelke-Petersen becomes premier in Country-Liberal Party coalition (to 1987).  
> 1000-strong civil liberties march includes ALP senator George Georges.

» 1969  
Bar lifted on married



women as permanent employees of State Public Service.

» 1970  
Joh survives tied vote in leadership challenge by voting for himself and using dubious proxy vote.

» 1971  
State of Emergency called in anticipation of protests against Springbok rugby

union test match.  
> Fraser Is Defenders Organisation (FIDO) opposes sand mining.  
> Senator Neville Bonner first Aborigine in federal parliament.

» 1973  
Voting age cut to 18.

» 1974  
Labor Party decimated in Qld election, winning only 11 seats; Country Party becomes



National Party of Australia.

> Bjelke-Petersen rejects ALP’s Senate replacement nominee, Mal Colston, and appoints disenchanted, anti-Whitlam ALP member Albert Field, left, opening way for constitutional crisis.

» 1977  
Over 700 right-to-march demonstrators

arrested in Brisbane in two months after Joh bans street protests.

» 1978  
Christians arrested for disobeying police order to cease singing hymns in Queens Park.  
> Peel Report says backbenchers of all

Every time Hanson was interviewed by some smart-alec, slick southern journalist, her approval rating would rise in Queensland, where paranoia and suspicion grow like mould in summer.

following orders. It was, however, a Lewis verbal; the orders came not from his political masters, but from Lewis himself. A month later, Fitzgerald heard evidence from Sgt Harry Burgess, known as "Dirty Harry". In the parlance, he had rolled over. Later, Burgess was to incriminate Jack Herbert, formerly of the licensing branch, branch inspectors Noel Dwyer and Graeme Parker (who had collected money for being "defamed") and, by hearsay, Lewis himself. The genie was out of the bottle.

By the time the inquiry was finished and the report in, Bjelke-Petersen was gone. He was forced out of office in December 1987 after increasingly erratic behaviour during which he tried to sack members of his cabinet. The then governor, former chief justice Sir Walter Campbell, neatly avoided a political crisis by telling Joh to reconsider.

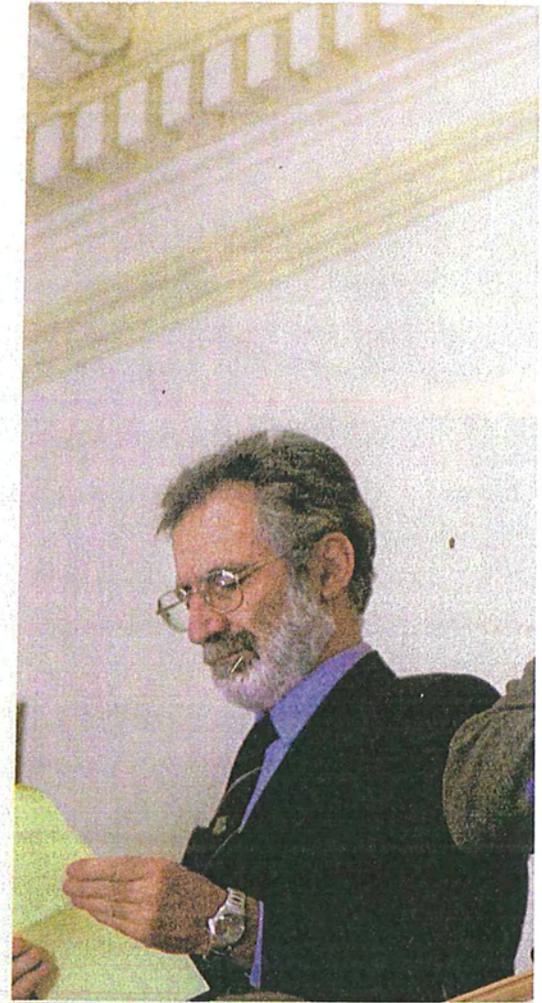
Lewis went to jail, as did some other crooked cops. He lost his knighthood and his house; he was bankrupted by the tax office and disgraced. But there are still people who believe he didn't get a fair trial because of the publicity. The Fitzgerald inquiry claimed other political scalps. Ministers went inside for fiddling their expenses and other allowances, in particular Don "Shady" Lane (who had been a copper mate of Lewis) and Lane's colleague Brian

Austin (who had defected with him after the 1983 election to give Bjelke-Petersen a National Party majority). Russ Hinze died before he could go to trial for allegedly copping a bribe from a property developer who had earlier done time for bribery. Bjelke-Petersen was put on trial for perjury, but the jury included a National Party member who could not be convinced of his guilt. He never faced a second trial.

Two and a half years after Fitzgerald began his inquiry, the Australian Labor Party under Wayne Goss was elected. It had been a long time: 32 years since the great split. The Goss era began well enough, with the conservative parties still reeling from defeat. It did not take long, however, for the Goss gloss to fade. By 1996, Queenslanders had had enough of Labor – in Goss's words, they were "waiting on their verandas with baseball bats". Goss took the first hit in the Mundingburra by-election which cost him his majority; Keating the second.

The 1996 federal election brought to the political stage a flame-haired former fish and chip shop owner from Ipswich, Pauline Hanson. Disendorsed by the Liberal Party before the election, she won the seat of Oxley – safe Labor and the only Queensland seat to withstand the anti-Whitlam tide in 1975 – as

an Independent. Her maiden speech six months later, in which she railed against Aborigines, immigrants, Asians, economists and various other targets, was seized on by the shock-jocks like Alan Jones and John Laws. Suddenly she was leading a political party – well, actually more of a small



company – and stumping the country. In the next state election, thanks to preference deals with the Liberals and the Nationals, One Nation candidates won 12 seats but promptly disintegrated into a rabble. Hanson's appeal was simple: she wasn't a politician and didn't pretend to be one. She was good at homing in on the problems caused by globalisation and technological advance but woefully short of solutions. Every time she was interviewed by some smart-alec, slick southern journalist, her approval rating would rise in Queensland, where paranoia and suspicion grow like mould in summer.

By 2001, Prime Minister John Howard had brought disaffected, former One Nation voters back to the traditional conservative fold, thanks to his stance on boat people. Hanson, perhaps distracted by criminal charges against her, failed to win a Senate seat. She might have gone, but the problems she barely articulated remain.

## POLICE LINE-UP, QUEENSLAND STYLE



parties misuse travel expenses.  
**>> 1979** Midnight demolition of historic Belle Vue Hotel causes furore; similar demolition of Cloudland Ballroom in 1982, Her Majesty's Theatre in 1984.

**>> 1980** Elaine Darling, right, first Qld woman in House of Representatives; Flo Bjelke-Petersen elected to Senate.  
 > Federal ALP votes for intervention in Qld branch to replace "old guard" office-bearers and reform party.  
 > State of emergency declared after power



workers strike; again in 1981 for transport workers' strike.  
**>> 1982** Eddie Mabo takes land rights case to High Court.  
**>> 1983** Liberal Ministers resign in protest when Joh sacks Terry White for voting with Labor to establish public accounts committee.

> Coalition collapses: Llew Edwards stands down and Joh rejects new Liberal leader Terry White as Deputy Premier.  
 > Nationals win majority when Liberals Don "Changing" Lane and Brian Austin defect; Sir William Knox leads Liberals.  
**>> 1985** State of emergency

over another power workers strike; 1000 SEQEB workers sacked; workforce reconstructed using no-strike clause.  
 > Liberal Sallyanne Atkinson, Brisbane's first woman lord mayor (to 1991).  
 > Fitzgerald inquiry into police and political corruption opens.

**>> 1986** Ill-fated "Joh for Canberra" movement launched.  
**>> 1987** Joh loses National Party leadership to Mike Ahern.  
**>> 1988** Qld police "bagman" Jack Herbert arrested in London.  
 > "Minister for Everything" Russ