



# **AUSTRALASIAN STUDY OF PARLIAMENT GROUP (Queensland Chapter)**

**FROM THE DLP TO FAMILY FIRST**

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Brisbane**

## FROM THE DLP TO FAMILY FIRST

**Ms MALONE:** Members of parliament, former members of parliament, ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the Queensland chapter of the Australasian Study of Parliament Group's discussion of 'From the DLP to Family First: The legacy of the DLP 30 years on'.

Before we move into tonight's proceedings, there are some further acknowledgments that I would like to make. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners, past and present, of the land on which we meet. I would also like to acknowledge some of the guests who have joined us this evening. The Hon. Kevin Rozzoli is a former Liberal member of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales from 1973 to 1999 and served as Speaker of that institution for seven years until 1995. Kevin is the president of the Australasian Study of Parliament Group, the parent body, and is passionate about furthering the understanding of members of parliament of the institutions in their custodianship and improving the function of our system of government. He has come from Sydney to be a part of this event this evening.

I would also like to acknowledge Mr Manfred Cross, former Labor member for Brisbane in the House of Representatives from 1961 until 1990. Manfred has, in addition to his distinguished service in the Australian parliament, been prominently involved in Queensland affairs and in the Labor Party organization in this state. Manfred has lived and breathed the events we will be discussing this evening and will undoubtedly provide some valuable commentary later in the evening.

I would also like to acknowledge Mr Dick Healy, who was a former supporter of the DLP in Queensland, editor of the DLP newsletter and a correspondent with B.A. Santamaria. Dick was invited to attend tonight's function by Tony Koch, an invitation warmly endorsed by the rest of the Queensland chapter ASPG executive. I look forward to hearing some of Dick's perspectives a little later.

Now I will briefly introduce the Australasian Study of Parliament Group for those who are attending for the first time. The Australasian Study of Parliament Group—shortened as the ASPG—was formed in 1978 to encourage and stimulate research, writing and teaching about parliamentary institutions in Australia and the South Pacific. The ASPG produces a journal, *Australasian Parliamentary Review*, twice a year and holds an annual conference in Australia or New Zealand.

The ASPG comprises chapters in each state and territory of Australia and in New Zealand, and individual chapters operate largely as we do. The Queensland chapter was established 11 years ago as a nonpartisan body to encourage and stimulate research, writing and teaching about parliamentary institutions in Australia in order to generate a better understanding of their functions. The Queensland chapter holds three to four seminars each year on topical issues relating to parliament in Queensland and Australia. Recent events have been 'Parliament and the Public Service', 'Parliamentary Privilege and the Media' and 'The Roles of Governors and Governors-General'.

It is our pleasure to bring you this discussion 'From the DLP to Family First'. It is timely—given that it is 30 years since the DLP vanished from the Australian parliamentary landscape—to review its relevance and to consider what its influence may have been in the evolution of the minor parties that are prominent on the parliamentary canvas in Australia in 2004. The topic will be ably explored by our three speakers: Paul Reynolds, Colleen Forrester and Paul Williams. Each will speak for about 20 minutes, and then we will allow about 30 minutes question and discussion time.

Paul Reynolds will initiate our discussion. Paul is Associate Professor, School of Political Science and International Studies at University of Queensland, where he has been teaching and researching in Queensland politics, electoral behaviour, Australian federal politics, political parties and minority groups for more than 30 years. Paul is also distinguished as the inaugural president of the Queensland chapter of the Australasian Study of Parliament Group, a role he filled for 10 years until last year, 2003. Paul has also served as the national president of the Australasian Study of Parliament Group and still serves on the national executive. He is the author of over 60 publications. Major works include *The Democratic Labor Party*, published in 1974, and *Lock, Stock and Barrel: The Political Biography of Mike Ahern*, published in 2002.

Paul's special interest in the DLP goes back a long way. He came to Australia, to Melbourne, from New Zealand, specifically to undertake doctoral research on the DLP. It may seem strange for a Kiwi to absorb himself in something so distinctly Australian, but Paul has held a scholarly interest in the nexus of religion and politics, a nexus amplified in the DLP. Paul's 1974 book on the DLP remains, after 30 years, an authoritative major source on the DLP. This evening Paul will deliver a paper which no doubt draws extensively on the thorough understanding he gained 30-odd years ago but which embraces his reflection on the subject 30 years on. The paper is entitled 'The Democratic Labor Party: a retrospect'. Ladies and gentlemen, Paul Reynolds.

**Dr REYNOLDS:** Thank you, Nonie. I suppose it would be arrogant—but I will do it anyway because that is the sort of person I am—to reflect on how wonderful it is to have the two speakers and the chair as former students of mine.

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The year 2004 marks the 30 years since the 1974 double dissolution election, the third since Federation, which brought about the demise of the Democratic Labor Party—hereafter the DLP—as a participant in Australian federal and state politics. The party did linger on in Victoria for several more years but to all intents and purposes the party—pun intended—was over. The DLP was unique in several respects, not least because it was the first, and to date the only, party since 1945 with elected representatives that has ceased to exist. Most undergraduate political science students have never heard of it, with the same probably obtaining for most voters under 40, despite its importance in helping to transform and revitalise the Senate, as demonstration that third parties can hold the balance of power, especially in upper houses, and utilise this position to their own advantage, and in pioneering the use of preferential voting systems to punish enemies and reward friends.

The purpose of this paper, then, is not to revisit in detail the events of the 1950s Labor split, nor again in detail to chronicle the activities of the party or its senators. Instead, it is intended to reflect on the purpose and role of the DLP and what legacy, if any, it bequeathed to Australian political history. With the possible exception of Lang Labor in New South Wales, the DLP was probably the most controversial political party in Australian history. The Labor split, particularly in Victoria and Queensland, was an exceedingly bitter event, with all the vituperativeness of a family dispute. It was also the last convulsion of sectarianism in Australian politics. And even when religion and ideology were masked by more pragmatic political issues and considerations, as in Queensland, the fallout was no less devastating. Labor governments were brought down in Victoria and Queensland, with their state Labor parties remaining in their respective political wildernesses for several decades. After the split, these branches were ruled by opponents of the industrial groupers and the DLP and became self-perpetuating entrenched oligarchies, only removed by federal intervention.

In New South Wales, clever political maneuvering by both the Roman Catholic Church and the state Labor party limited the damage to a series of expulsions, notably the assistant state secretary and later Senator Jack Kane. While preserving the state ALP government, it also perpetuated the New South Wales Right as the most powerful state and national faction within the ALP. Within the church, the dispute was referred to Rome, which ruled that the church as an organisation must eschew party politics, thereby ostensibly endorsing the position of the Sydney hierarchy in contradiction to that of Melbourne.

Looking back on the events of and the circumstances surrounding the split, one is struck by the ancient regime quality of it all. Indeed, the 1950s split marked the end of the second phase of ALP history. The first can be calculated from 1890 to the conscription split of 1916. This latter event ended the early optimistic and successful phase of Labor politics, driving Protestant nonconformists out of the party, which was then left in the hands of Irish derived Roman Catholics and secularists. The 1950s split then swept away this internal configuration and it took the ALP until Gough Whitlam's accession to the leadership for another new and different political style and emphasis to emerge.

At one level, then, the DLP represented those who were left outside the Labor Party after the split had run its course. Tactically, they were the losers. They did not replace the ALP as the rank and file majority did not follow them and, although winning the assets of the then Victorian branch, this proved a hollow victory as the DLP was no electoral match for the Victorian ALP, even given the latter's state of lengthy electoral enfeeblement.

In 1970, and once the branch had been reconstituted with an emphasis on inclusiveness at the leadership level, together with the potential for factional diversity in its composition, the DLP's days in Victoria were necessarily numbered. Ironically then, the DLP's fate was linked to that of the ALP. Where the Labor Party did not split but suffered a series of resignations and expulsions, the DLP was of only marginal importance in the state and federal politics of those jurisdictions, namely New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania. Where the post-split ALP organisation declined into oligarchical ossification, as in Victoria and Queensland, the DLP profited accordingly, the more so in Victoria as in Queensland the DLP had disappeared seven years prior to federal intervention.

There are four major areas which this paper now addresses, namely the dynamics of the DLP vote, the development of a second preference policy and strategy, the role for minor parties in the Senate, and the Senate itself as a key political institution.

I turn now to DLP support, and I quote from Brian Toohey's article in the Australian Financial Review of 8 September 2004. In retrospect, there seems to be a consensus as to who voted for the DLP and with what consequences. A typical summary is offered by the ABC's election analyst Antony Green. The article states—

Green says the DLP acted as a catalyst for gradually shifting middle-class Catholics, who had historically voted Labor, across to the coalition on a first-preference basis. He gives the example of a high-profile Liberal candidate at this election, Andrew Robb, who handed out how-to-vote cards for the DLP as a youth.

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This 'consensus' is the more remarkable because at the time the DLP vote was so consistently under sampled that an article was written by Don Aitkin to explain this phenomenon. It is called 'Tracking down the DLP Voter' in the Australian Quarterly.

There was only ever one attempt made to survey the DLP vote, and this was in Melbourne by me in 1972 for my doctorate, as Nonie mentioned. The results showed that 16 per cent were professional managerial in occupation, 19 per cent were white collar, 20 per cent were blue collar, 34 per cent were housewives and 12 per cent were retired. Upward mobility had occurred, as 49 per cent of respondents had fathers in blue-collar employment, while another 16 per cent had been farmers. Income distribution figures showed that, in 1972, 22 per cent earned under \$60 a week, 37 per cent earned between \$61 and \$100 a week, and 24 per cent earned over \$100 a week.

Whatever else these figures denote, it is not Green's middle-class Catholics. Rather, they were working to lower-middle-class Catholic voters with modest income levels. Indeed, in self-classing terms, 55 per cent claimed to be working class or lower middle class while 63 per cent put their parents in the same class locations.

Religion was, of course, the distinguishing feature. Seventy-eight per cent were Roman Catholic and 24 per cent claimed various Protestant affiliations. Non-Christian and agnostic or atheist respondents virtually did not exist. A very high 69 per cent had attended mass in the last month—nearly two-thirds in the previous fortnight.

This sample, comprising 322 respondents, demonstrated that the core DLP vote was strongly attached to the church, integrated in its structures and had most of their friends and associational linkages in church related organisations. This then was strongly reminiscent of the clannish, almost tribal quality of Irish working-class Catholicism. That these respondents resided in six safe Labor seats—Batman, Gellibrand, Lalor, Maribyrnong, Melbourne and Scullin—and only in one safe Liberal seat, Kooyong, reinforces this working-class to lower middle-class composition. However, and by contrast, about 30 per cent of the sample indicated that churchgoing was relatively unimportant to them in that they attended infrequently if at all. They were a heterogeneous group who may have been protest voters, ex-Liberals—for the purposes of the 1972 federal election—and Senate but not House of Representatives DLP supporters, particularly as in the last off-year Senate election in 1970, to which I will come back in a moment, the DLP's Frank McManus polled 19.1 per cent of the first preference vote in Victoria. The slogan in Victoria was, 'Put Mac Back.' In Queensland, some of us—Manfred, I am sure, and Barbara—will remember, it was 'Keep Gair There.' Why?

A third dimension of this group may well have been lapsed Catholics, for whom voting for the DLP was a residual act of solidarity and/or group loyalty. There was also the question of the DLP migrant vote. Evidence of this has been discussed in my book, which Nonie referred to, and essentially showed that support was maximised amongst Russians and Polish Catholics but not amongst Polish Jews and more generally amongst East Europeans. There was a notable lack of support amongst southern Europeans, particularly Italians and Maltese, both of whom had migrated from countries where the Roman Catholic Church had in the then recent past been heavily involved in local politics. Clerical politics in the homeland of those migrants certainly do not translate into DLP support in Australia.

As to the other variables, 46 per cent were in the 18 to 35 age cohort and 27 per cent had university or CAE qualifications. The impression from these data is of a younger, relatively well-educated and devout Catholic voter. However, other data which I drew from Hans Mol's study Religion in Australia show that while these characteristics accounted for most of the DLP vote, the DLP did not itself account for the majority of those in this demographic, even in its Melbourne strongholds. The DLP was not a clerical party, although its strident anticommunism was religiously motivated. Its overt religious and church characteristics inexorably declined over time, even from the beginning in 1957, when the Vatican ruled in support of the anti-DLP stance of Cardinal Gilroy and Bishop Carroll in Sydney—the so called Sydney line—as opposed to Archbishop Mannix and his Victorian provincial bishops, the so-called Melbourne line. This process was hastened by the death of Archbishop Mannix in 1963 and the subsequent distancing of the Melbourne hierarchy from the Victorian DLP.

I turn now to second preference strategy. Preferential voting was introduced federally by Billy Hughes for the 1918 Flinders by-election, which coincided with the national emergence of the Country Party. It was designed to prevent the two anti-Labor parties from dividing the non-Labor vote under the then first-past-the-post system of the day, thereby enabling Labor to take the seat. With the introduction of compulsory voting for the 1924 federal election, the electoral legislation for the House of Representatives was now in place. Further electoral change in 1948 to introduce proportional representation for the Senate, and a raft of electoral reforms in 1983, did not alter the compulsory preferential nature of federal lower house elections. In the absence of minor parties, preferential voting

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was of little consequence in the outcome of elections save where there were three-cornered contests. As these were relatively random and reflected the configuration of the local or state Nationalist/UAP/Liberal-Country Party relationships, little in the way of national trends emerged.

The advent of the DLP then fundamentally altered the dynamics of second preference voting in two related ways. First, the party had a block of voters sustained by socio-religious ties who had with determination either followed their leaders out of the ALP believing that the latter was a tainted party or supported this development and approved of it. Secondly, they were committed to obeying the dictates of DLP policy to punish Labor, this being more important to them than rewarding the coalition, despite the logic that the latter would be the inevitable consequence of the former. For the coalition then it was a case of my enemy's enemy is my friend.

As the DLP was able to direct between two-thirds and nine-tenths of its preferences, depending on a number of variables, this meant that for the first time what was a small first preference support base became, via the second preference strategy, a formidable block vote. From 1954 to 1974 many ALP first preference leads in state and federal elections were overturned by the DLP preference flow, while countless coalition leads were strengthened and confirmed. At the national level, the DLP's second preferences saved the 1961 and 1969 coalition governments. Additionally, by threatening Prime Minister John Gorton that it would withhold preferences in strategic seats unless and until his government adopted foreign and defence policies acceptable to the DLP, the DLP prevented the calling of an early election in 1968.

A less quantifiable result of the second preference strategy was that it kept a generation and more of Labor politicians on the opposition benches, both federally and in Victoria and Queensland. The ramifications were profound as people of ability were denied their opportunity to perform in government. It is interesting to note that many of Whitlam's first cabinet were old men at the end of their political career, while in Bob Hawke's first cabinet only four ministers had served under Whitlam. In both Victoria in 1982 and Queensland in 1989, no-one in these incoming Labor governments had previously experienced government, while in 1972 only three members had sat on Chifley's back bench between 1946 and 1949.

Two decades of DLP second preference strategy had then taught the major parties that attention to preferences was now an important aspect of electoral planning. It is noteworthy that when, in 1977, the Australian Democrats contested their first election, Don Chipp virtuously announced that the ADs would not direct their preferences as they would not presume to tell their supporters how further to vote. Pragmatically, of course, in 1977 Chipp had no idea who would vote for his party, let alone how many would do so, and whether they would be susceptible to thus being directed. As it happened in 1977, the Democrats performed best in safe Liberal seats and, undirected, their preferences split 60-40 in favour of Labor.

The ADs have long since dropped any pretence at not directing preferences, while the Greens have always done so. Indeed, the Greens are similar to the DLP in that they have a defined position and are prepared to mete out reward and punishment to major parties according to how fully the latter are prepared to embrace the Greens' version of the environmental cause. If you want land rights for gay whales, vote the Greens. Thus the Liberals in 1996 could promise that a high proportion of the sale of Telstra would be diverted to environmental policies, thereby neutralising Green preferences in an election the Liberals were desperate to win. It may seem to draw a long bow between the DLP's preference strategy in the 1950s and 1960s and that of contemporary minor parties, but the DLP taught an ongoing lesson: that by proxy, the preferential voting system allows smaller players to influence electoral outcomes in a fashion denied their counterparts in a first-past-the-post system. It is surely ironic that when this lesson was being discovered, Labor was the loser. Now, generally, it appears to be the legatee.

I turn now to the role of minor parties in the Senate, and this is where the handout will perhaps come into importance. An understandable but fundamental misconception many people have acquired is that the electoral system gives rise to political parties. This is an understandable deduction as such systems have the capacity to advance or retard the operation of political parties. But it is the complexion of society and the array of its political forces which give rise to political parties. The parties themselves are invariably formed from those sections of society which lay claim to participate in the national decision-making process but feel themselves not represented by the status quo and by the existing array of political forces. That having been said, the introduction of proportional representation for the Senate in 1948 did not either produce minor parties or create a balance-of-power situation in that chamber, much less revitalise the Senate as a house of review. However, without the introduction of PR or some similar variant, in all probability none of the above would have occurred.

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The Chifley government then introduced PR for the 1949 election, while six years later the DLP contested its first election when the system had yet to yield its full potentiality. The ALP, while losing office in 1949, retained—for the last time—its Senate majority, until 1951 when the coalition gained Senate control. An examination of the Senate's composition over the six elections in the 1955 to 1970 period reveals a changing pattern of party-political dynamics rather than the automatic and inevitable assumption of the balance of power by a minor party. In both 1955 and 1964, the Senate was equally divided between government and non-government senators. Under the Senate's standing orders, should a vote be split equally, the question is resolved in the negative. However, as the DLP senators almost invariably voted with the government—that is, against Labor—the government was not notably disadvantaged, although the numerical division was to prove a harbinger of future trends.

Between 1958 and 1961, the government had control over the Senate, so the balance of power was not an issue. However, in the remaining instances the picture is less forthright than may have been assumed. 1961 to 1964 presented a scenario where it required both the only DLP and independent Senators to vote against the government to negate the vote, a situation comparable with 1955 to 1958 and 1964 to 1967. Hence, after the DLP began its period of Senate representation in 1955, the government had no reason to fear that its upper house hegemony was under serious threat. The potential for this did not emerge until 1967, some 12 years later. Even after 1967, it could be argued that the de facto loss of Senate control was mostly attributable to the elections for both houses being out of step, as Prime Minister Menzies had called the House out in 1963 without having the appropriate legislative trigger to produce a double dissolution. Even so, the consequences merely reverted to those obtaining in 1955. From 1967 until 1974, the DLP did have the balance of power in that, should the independents vote with Labor, the coalition would have needed the DLP to vote with it to avoid defeat on the floor of the Senate.

Given the dynamics of the Senate—bargaining, maneuvering and generally wheeling and dealing—in practice the point had been forcefully made; namely, that minor parties could, under certain conditions, win and hold the balance of power. What they did with this balance of power depended on a host of other factors such as who was in government and with what agenda, what other parties or interests were represented in the Senate, what point of the electoral cycle had been reached, what political risks attended pushing a government hard on any part of its program and what factors accounted for the current atmospherics in the Senate, including the conduct of its business.

After 1974, no government allowed House and Senate elections to be held independently, as separate Senate polls had functioned as national by-elections part-way through a government's term. The wipe-out of the DLP in 1974 saw the balance of power rest with two independents. The period between 1975 and 1981 marked a return to government control over the Senate. Thereafter, various combinations and permutations of independents and minor parties held the balance, with the Australian Democrats being key players. As we know, after the last election the government has regained control.

I turn to the changing role of the Senate. The revitalisation of the Senate, the better to fulfill its role and review functions, occurred from 1970. While there were other matters at issue, fundamentally this revitalisation came down to the establishment of a permanent standing committee system for the Senate, with the majority of senators having the power either to refer any matter, including proposed legislation, to the appropriate committee or to create a standing committee for that purpose. Senator Lionel Murphy QC was the author of these reforms from his position as Labor leader in the Senate.

Although some, perhaps most, of his House of Representative colleagues were skeptical—and Fred Daly famously rubbished him for this—a longstanding Labor shibboleth had been the abolition of the Senate, so any strengthening of its powers would fly in the face of this sentiment. For others in the ALP caucus, the strong feeling was that, as the party was likely to be one election away from government and it could not obtain a Senate majority until 1973 or 1974 at the earliest, there was little point in giving the Senate more power to wield over an incoming Labor government with a longstanding reform program.

Murphy, however, with the Labor senators behind him and the government firmly opposed, needed the DLP senators to bring about the changes. The DLP were enthusiastically in favour, as any increase in the powers and profiles of the Senate would, they surmised, be to their benefit. At the time this was a reasonable assumption but, despite maintaining their numbers for the following election—in 1970 they achieved five senators, the most they ever gained—any progress in the cause of Senate enhancement was swept away by the Senate's continual obstruction of Whitlam's legislation which led both to the 1974 double dissolution elections and, more famously, to the 1975 dismissal.

Thus any subsequent—from 1970—evaluation of the role of the Senate, through its committee system and, by extension, its investigative role, needs to begin with the circumstances of 1970 and the

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preparedness of the DLP from the crossbenches to support parliamentary reform in the teeth of opposition from the then government, which the DLP had hitherto and variably supported on all major issues.

And now to the best part of my the paper: the conclusion. The most important structural reason for the decline of the DLP came from within the Roman Catholic Church itself. Vatican II was a climactic event for worldwide Catholicism and brought about a pluralism within its ranks that hitherto had been unimaginable. Politically in Australia, it meant that only the Communist Party was proscribed; yet, even then, dialogue was encouraged between Catholics and communists. Not much of it happened, though. The orthodoxy propagated by the DLP-NCC axis that a good Catholic was anticommunist, that the DLP was the only party fully anticommunist and that the ALP was soft on communism—ergo, the good Catholic votes DLP and repudiates the ALP—was now and for the first time seriously challenged.

Contemporaneously, the DLP had never trained or promoted a new and younger generation of leaders to replace the increasingly bitter old men who harked back to the intra-Labor battles of the 1950s; nor did it systematically engage young supporters in its affairs, despite the characteristics of its voting profile.

In B.A. Santamaria it had an ideologue who, while having a high rate of recognition, was almost wholly negative in his views and attitudes, singing a one-note song of anticommunism which, as the politics of the 1960s gave way to that of the 1970s, looked and was increasingly out of touch.

While the DLP had been able to carve out a constituency and a role in the Senate—in large part owing to the three off-year half-Senate elections—and had managed to keep Labor from office federally and in two states, when the electorate became polarised in the tumultuous politics of the 1970s the DLP was swept away. In an act of supreme political folly, its senators supported the coalition's threat to supply in 1974 and totally miscalculated the cohesiveness and durability of its Senate vote in the three eastern states. By nominating for the House of Representatives only in Victoria, it effectively suicided in New South Wales, Queensland and elsewhere. Even in Victoria, McManus's handsome win of 1970 proved totally ephemeral. The DLP had become a prisoner of its past. By 1974 it was no longer needed by Santamaria for the anticommunist crusade—such as it was by then—and, more importantly for the DLP, the majority of Australian Roman Catholics never wanted the party in the first place and shed no tears at its demise. There was not even an Irish wake.

**Ms MALONE:** Thank you, Paul. Paul has given us a comprehensive overview of the maxims of the DLP, the composition of DLP support, the electoral effect of the DLP's use of second preferences to achieve its aim of thwarting Labor, its pioneering of the balance of power in the Senate and its modeling effect for subsequent minor parties. But we might still ask: where did this historically important player on the Australian political scene come from and how was it sustained? Colleen Forrester will add to our understanding of this.

Colleen is a professional lobbyist and advocate for community groups. She has had a lifetime of immersion in and observation of politics and political players, formatively in New South Wales and from there into the Queensland realm. It will become apparent to you as she speaks that she has enjoyed contact with a wide range of people from both church and state who held influence over the events that led to the creation of the DLP. Her academic interests have been in religious studies and government. These, plus her previous contacts, explain Colleen's interest, while a student at UQ in 1984, in interviewing B.A. Santamaria, whom she had met in the 1960s.

In discussing her interview with Mr Santamaria, Colleen will elucidate some of the factors and conditions behind the formation of what was commonly known as 'the movement' and what ultimately became the DLP. She will give you her special perspective as a Catholic growing up in the times that spawned the dissension and cleavages that were ultimately politicised and particised. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Colleen Forrester to discuss her interview with B.A. Santamaria.

**Ms FORRESTER:** Thanks very much, Nonie. I feel as though I should ask: is there anyone here who has not been taught by Paul Reynolds? I think he has the numbers though!

Paul spoke about the DLP—the successes and failures at elections—referred to Mr B.A. Santamaria and alluded briefly to the conflict between a number of the Catholic bishops, centred on what was commonly called 'the movement'. My role tonight is to speak briefly of my experiences, and I am conscious that there are people here who have had many different and richer experiences over the same time period we are talking about, and I hope that at question time these experiences will come out and enrich those who have not had them.

I am particularly to speak about the interview with and subsequent phone calls I received from Mr Santamaria in the early 1980s. But firstly I would like to paint a pen picture of the society of the time that

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we are talking about, from my point of view—a personal perspective—because one cannot talk about the DLP, the National Civic Council or ‘the movement’ without understanding the society of the day.

I came from what would be referred to as good Labor stock. My maternal grandparents were active unionists and on the executive of their respective unions, and my grandmother was on the New South Wales ALP executive—quite unusual for a woman of her time. She was from a large Catholic family and chose to marry a Presbyterian who was a prominent Mason, not exactly endearing herself to either her family or the local parish priest, particularly as my grandfather turned up for the wedding in his Masonic regalia—a statement of two very strong-minded people, I think. To this day, I have never seen the wedding photos of my grandparents.

Because it was what we referred to as a mixed marriage, they had to be married in the sacristy. That is, they were not allowed to bring a non-Catholic to be married in front of the altar. It was the practice of the day for what were referred to as mixed marriages. However, they managed, apparently, to overcome all the obstacles of bigoted families on both sides, led a very active life—one that was full of social justice principles—reared three children and appeared to be very happy.

My mother was one of those three children. She was also instilled with those values and became an active unionist. When my father appeared on the scene and marriage was decided upon, apparently the family sighed contentedly because she had chosen well—a practising Catholic and a Labor man. Unfortunately, their wedding had to be postponed because there was a state election in New South Wales at the time and they had both supported different factions within the Labor Party. One had gone with Lang Labor and the other stayed with Labor. They managed to resolve those differences and they were lifelong members of the ALP. My father was elected to the Sydney City Council and various councils and became a mayor in other local government authorities.

They both had a healthy disrespect for the clergy and, dare I say, even politicians, and they counselled their children not to follow blindly either the beliefs or the instructions of those people just because of the office of the person giving them. ‘Respect the office but not necessarily the person.’ It is advice that I follow to this day, somewhat to my detriment at times. They had both seen first hand and lived through the discomfort and hurt that had been inflicted on human beings by the church, all being done in the name of a merciful God, because those people doing so knew that they were part of the one true faith.

I grew up in a sectarian world, harsh and uncompromising. The minute I put my school uniform on, I knew I was different from my neighbours. What was worse was that my mother, who was a great educationalist, decided that the state school had a better primary education for the first couple of years but then sent us to the Catholic school, so we were six of one and half a dozen of the other. Every time I walked past a state school to go to my Catholic school I was reminded of my inadequacies, and I am sure that any of you who have been through that period would remember the dirty ditties that people would shout at each other. Catholics gave as good as they got. Edmund Campion has written about it wonderfully well in *Rockchoppers*, and I recommend the book to those who are interested in the period.

Gerard Henderson writes that at the turn of the century Australian Catholics were an isolated and socially deprived minority, in part self-inflicted by the decision of the church to maintain its own separate school system. But in the main, he states, Catholics were set apart because of their religion, their Irish inheritance and low socioeconomic position. I belonged to the aspirational group of Catholics—probably the same sort of people we are talking about before elections at the moment—who viewed, through their parents’ and their relatives’ eyes particularly, that education was the way to achieve more in society, a way of becoming part of the establishment, being with all the decision makers.

In the world that I grew up in, Catholics were denied access to certain areas of employment. I started work at the age of 15 at the Commonwealth Bank, having been very proud of topping the state exam and being accepted. At the age of 15 you could start work. I started work in Martin Place, which was the head office. On my first day I was pulled up by the manager of the Commonwealth Bank to be told that I was going to be part of an experiment, that I would be the first Catholic to be placed in a non-Catholic department and that the future of the world as I knew it depended on my behaviour. I was not to say any prayers while I was at work. I actually did not know anyone at that stage who prayed during work. It was an intimidation but a very rich experience for me. There were other sections of the Public Service where Catholics went, such as Customs in New South Wales and the police force. This was the type of behaviour that we grew up with.

I joined the ALP at an early age and became part of the hurly-burly of ALP activities in Sydney. My family would be more what we know now as the Centre Left—suspicious of the Right faction and even more so of those who were not too kindly referred to as groupers. Carrying on what I now understand was a family tradition, I introduced a B.A. Santamaria supporter, admirer and active grouper

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to my family as my future husband. He came from an extremely conservative Catholic family. I had to prove my worth to his family as well, of course. In my family, speaking the name of B.A. Santamaria was indeed somewhat akin to using obscene language. We had interesting family gatherings.

I met Mr Santamaria in the early 1960s, shortly after marriage. It was the start for me of what was to become a fascination—an interest—to understand the passion and the driving force behind the public persona of the man who had influenced and helped shape the Australian political scene for so many years.

I started my university life in my thirties as a mother of six. As an undergraduate I was fortunate enough to have Dr Paul Reynolds as one of my lecturers, and a friendship developed from, dare I say, the first time he gave me a decent mark!

**Dr Reynolds:** Well deserved, though.

**Ms FORRESTER:** I am sure. I was also fortunate enough to be a student under Irene Webley, whom some of you might remember from Queensland University. Irene knew of my background and my involvement. When you start off, you share your life with your university lecturer and you wonder why you do not get top grades. She came to me and suggested that, because of my contacts and knowledge, I might consider doing an independent study—write a paper on B.A. Santamaria and go and interview him.

It was interesting because in the period between 1960 and 1980 there had been—this is an understatement—a huge falling out between my husband and other contacts and Mr Santamaria and the National Civic Council. There had been threats of legal action and there were times when we thought we would lose everything that we had. I did not hold him in high regard. It was somewhat of a challenge to hear Irene say, 'Look, you have got this relationship. Why don't you go and interview him?' I was surprised when I phoned him and he took the call and agreed to be interviewed.

In 1984 I went down and spent a long period with him and he followed that up with a number of phone calls. As some of you who knew him realise, and those of you who may have read some of his works know, he was an intellectual, a brilliant public speaker and a man of great personal charm. He was proud of his identity as the son of a poor Italian migrant, his friendship with so many prominent global figures and, of course, his relationship with the princes of his church.

One cannot talk about Santamaria without mentioning Dr Mannix. In 1911 he was appointed to Melbourne as coadjutor archbishop with the right of succession—a very, very important factor. He had been president of Maynooth in Ireland. He was an Irish nationalist and brought with him the rigidity in matters relating to Catholic doctrine that was typical of a man of his time. There are many stories that make one as a Catholic cringe concerning the bigotry and uncompromising attitude that he had with respect to mixed marriages and refusing to allow Catholics to be part of ecumenical or Anglican services, even when it came to the trooping of the colour or the raising of the flag. There are many, many funny and embarrassing stories.

People wanted him to come here and be the intellectual they thought the church did not have and looked forward to him raising the argument for what Catholics called 'justice for Catholic schools'—and we would probably talk about the state aid debate also. He saw that education was a way to gain what we perhaps did not have. He saw tertiary education as a top priority for the Catholic masses and was the driving force behind establishing Newman College in Melbourne.

B.A. Santamaria was 22 and about to finish his articles when he was asked by Archbishop Mannix to be one of two members of the National Secretariat of Catholic Action. Santamaria was a prominent member of the Champion Society, which was a study group, as he says, of Catholic university men. He had founded the Catholic Worker and was at that stage editing the paper. Santamaria said to me, and he has written it in his papers, that he took the job not because it had long-term prospects but rather because it seemed to be the right thing to do at the time, as many of you who corresponded with him would know. It was in a lot of his writings and sayings. It is though he just did it at the time and that there was no grand plan. He says that one of the most useful services that he provided was the establishment of the National Catholic Rural Movement and the drafting and publication of the annual social justice statements of the Australian bishops.

More prominent, of course, was the concentration of his efforts on the communist problem, as he called it, within the unions. For Santamaria and his supporters, communists acting under Moscow's instructions were using their control over key unions to undermine the Australian economy and also to influence ALP policies. In 1940, to take control of the ALP, the communists, according to his writings, needed only a handful of votes.

Santamaria's Catholic Social Studies Movement, which eventually became the National Civic

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Council organisation, judiciously combined prayer, action and, of course, God in the fight. If you donated to them, you were published in the list for what was known as the 'fighting fund'. The words used by Santamaria were emotive. They were fighting the godless, and, what is more, it was every Catholic's duty and obligation to do so. They were the people of Christ fighting the antichrists.

I am drawing on insufficiently famous and unpublished memoirs by Noel Tennyson, who may be known to some of you, who was prominent in the DLP and then the NCC here in Queensland. He writes about how the adrenaline used to run through his veins at the beginning of meetings when they said this prayer—

Lord Jesus Christ our King, help us come together now in Your name, to think like You, to work through You, to live in You, to give You all our strength and all our time. May Your kingdom come in our factories and our offices and workshops, in our social institutions and homes. Help us make You better known and loved and served in all Australia.

They were not separate. Religion and faith were combined in the activities.

The ALP formed industrial groups to fight communism, and they became the framework for the social justice studies group against communism. As unionists, the industrial groups went around knocking on the doors of other unionists to encourage them to behave in a certain way. For the industrial groupers it was very important to get unionists to support, for example, court-controlled ballots. Unity tickets—I am sure Manfred could speak at length about unity tickets—where ALP and communist members ran on the same ticket and not against each other, were an essential ingredient in this fight.

The organisation that was to become the NCC gathered people around it, and they would travel to union meetings. From Sydney they would travel in convoy to Newcastle to a meeting of, perhaps, the waterside workers union, which was controlled by the Communist Party. Such was the intensity that there were physical fights, people were bashed and people were isolated. It was really a fight for control of different unions—nothing we would really understand in this day and age.

They had a 14-point strategy. They understood that the Communist Party wanted to govern Australia. The communists could not be elected in their own right, but they could use the ALP to do so. Access to the ALP was available through the trade union movement. Union delegates contributed 60 per cent of the votes at ALP conferences—therefore, they could affect policies—and the communists controlled most major industry unions throughout Australia: shipping, power, transport, building and heavy metal. Anti-communist forces formed industrial groups in the ALP to oppose communist infiltration of the unions. Both members of 'the movement' and ALP unionists came together in joint actions.

Santamaria quoted Lance Sharkey to me, that in the trade unions the foundation of unity is laid which will in the end compel the ALP to agree to the united front of the political parties—a Communist Party-ALP united action. But there were very, very many people who stood up for what they believed and also suffered for it.

Paul referred to Bishop James Carroll. Bishop James Carroll, as Monsignor Carroll, was my parish priest so I grew up in Sydney with this wonderful intellectual man who was able to convey Gospel values to those of us who perhaps were at church not for the right reasons. We were there because we were obliged to go, but in the process we learnt from this great intellectual. He had studied in Rome and was very anti 'the movement'. To say it was a Sydney-Melbourne split is an overstatement, and time does not allow us to go into it, but Bishop Carroll convinced Cardinal Gilroy that the way of the Melbourne people was not the way for the good of the church, the Australian people and, as a side issue, the ALP.

After the split there were meetings held everywhere about which way people would go. Of course, in Melbourne they decided to go with Mannix and Santamaria, and in Sydney the view of Bishop Carroll prevailed. They had, as Paul said, gone to Rome to get a ruling on whether Catholics were permitted to continue with what was seen as Catholic action, and Rome responded to the arguments being put forward by James Carroll.

Bishop Carroll really objected to the secrecy of how it was organised. The National Civic Council and 'the movement' were copies of the Communist Party with cells operating everywhere. It was very, very effective, but somehow or other Bishop Carroll did not see that this was the right way to go. He had some influence on a number of bishops, so the bishops all around the place divided. There was even a stage where we had Bishop Fox, who was from Bendigo, saying that it was a mortal sin to vote for the ALP. Weal so had the bishop of South Australia, a personal friend of Bob Santamaria, threatening to excommunicate NCC people if they did not toe the line.

It was a time of great turmoil, the church was not united and regionalism was a factor. Duhig, the bishop here, was very supportive of Santamaria. I believe that in 1960 Santamaria spoke to an overflowing crowd in the Brisbane City Hall and Duhig moved the vote of thanks.

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When the split in the ALP came and the DLP was formed, many ordinary Catholic families were greatly affected. In fact, I remember a woman whom we called an aunt—I was only a child at the time; I am not as old as I look—who was the secretary of an adjoining ALP branch. She defected to the DLP and took along the funds and all the records. It was a great horror. Aunty was never spoken to again, was not allowed to come back into our home, and vice versa. We were all Christian, but we were not that Christian.

It was not only the hierarchy and clerics who either supported or opposed the organisation led by Santamaria. The people at the Catholic Worker, the paper that Santamaria founded, saw it as their duty to be part of the opposition. Max Charlesworth writes—

Some Catholics opposed the movement out of Machiavellian political moves. Others opposed it because of their genuine concern for the good of the ALP or, as they saw it, the good of the church. They may have been wrong in their belief that the movement comprised the true image of the church, but at any rate that was their belief. They presented another point of view to Australian Catholics.

The Catholic Worker tried to display, as faithfully as it could, the true image of the church. As Paul has mentioned, the winds of change swept through the church and released so many of us within the church. It was very difficult for those who had been brought up in the time, particularly in Melbourne with Mannix. There was a meeting at Kensington Monastery of about 500 religious priests, brothers and religious sisters, chaired by a Jesuit, to explain to them the changes that were coming—that it probably was not a mortal sin if you ate meat on Friday, that you could perhaps go to the wedding of your non-Catholic friend, et cetera. It addressed all these terrible barriers that we put up against other Christians. Towards the end of this meeting this rather elderly nun got up. She was very distressed and she asked, 'Father, what has happened to all those people we condemned to hell because they ate meat on a Friday?' Father said, 'Well, Sister, we don't know that God followed our instructions, do we?'

When Mannix passed away, quickly support from the Melbourne hierarchy for Santamaria went, too. He was sacked from the television appearances that he made on behalf of the Catholic Church within 16 hours of the archbishop's death. However, he was contacted some three days later by Sir Frank Packer. There was an election coming up and he offered Santamaria a spot on television. He negotiated then for a long-running program of a Sunday called Point of View. Many people would come home from church and either swear at the television or say their prayers.

Santamaria was an interesting person. Today, when I was thinking about this, I could not think of the words to conclude, because we all reacted in different ways to Santamaria. He was always personally charming to me and very obliging. He had the capacity to evoke strong and passionate reactions to both himself and his ideas. Peter Coleman, who was parliamentary leader of the New South Wales Liberal Party, wrote in 1964 that if he had to list the three most influential personalities in Australian politics since the war he would name Evatt, Robert Menzies and B.A. Santamaria. He said that Santamaria was the most dramatically controversial of them all. Graham Freudenberg also wrote that Santamaria was unique in Australian history as her only political intellectual in the high European tradition. I do not know whether I quite agree.

By sheer force of intellect and persistence of will, he created and sustained a political idea which influenced a generation and influenced events for a generation. He was a brilliant populariser and accomplished television performer of his time, yet his intellectual and philosophical system was so alien to the Australian pragmatic mainstream that he remained an Australian exotic. In the end he failed—perhaps the most complete failure of all the front rank Australians of our time.

Father Edmund Campion—great author and a lecturer in history—says that Santamaria was a brilliant public speaker, capable of inspiring audiences with a sweeping vision of history and with their potential, allowing us to see as participants in a great historical process.

Almost everyone who met B.A. Santamaria testified to his charm. Those who knew him well called him a humble man who rarely spoke of himself but always insistently of ideas and policies. He was apolitical intellectual in the European mould—a rare bird in the Australian society. Santamaria argued from a rounded and coherent philosophy of humankind, and every detail of his thinking was connected to everything else. Those of us who conversed with him, wrote to him and even had the tenacity to argue with him cannot disagree. According to Campion, Santamaria became the most famous Catholic layman in Australia—next to Ned Kelly, of course.

**Ms MALONE:** Thank you, Colleen. Colleen has given the context in which a minor party evolved half a century ago through a combination of religious and ideological convictions and also a great insight into the role and the character of Mr B.A. Santamaria.

Now Paul Williams will bring our discussion to 2004, to an analysis of the legacy of the DLP and its influence in the evolution of the minor parties that are affecting our political environment today. Paul

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Williams is a lecturer at the School of Politics and Public Policy at Griffith University. His research interests are Australian political parties and elections, current Australian federal and state politics and public policy, Australian economic social and cultural history and political leadership.

Paul's PhD dissertation was a study of the electoral decline of the Liberal Party in the late 1960s. He is published in the Australian Journal of Political Science, the Australian Journal of Politics and History and the Australian Quarterly. He is also a frequent contributor to the Australian and the Courier-Mail and is a regular commentator in the electronic media on a range of topics in Queensland and Australian politics. Notable recent articles include: 'Queensland: any signs of maturity?' and 'The Fitzgerald legacy: 15 years on'.

His 2004 post-election analysis for Australian Quarterly and media commentary during the recent election campaign included discussion and analysis of the rise and prospects of Family First. He will now extend that commentary to address the topic 'From DLP to Family First: the legacy of the DLP 30 years on'. Please welcome Paul.

**Dr WILLIAMS:** Thank you, Nonie. Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I must say first of all: thanks very much for the opportunity to come along and speak tonight. It is a great privilege, and I thank you very much.

The name of my paper is 'From DLP to Family First: minor parties turning full circle?', the idea perhaps being that 30 years on, after the eventual demise of the DLP, at least from a parliamentary presence, another conservative, religious based party might be haunting the halls of the Senate. In the course of this paper I will be advancing two arguments. The first, on a more generic level, is that the DLP was an appropriate template for minor parties to follow—the Democrats, the Greens and perhaps now Family First. The second argument—one not unrelated to the first—is the idea or argument that Family First may, in fact, become the DLP of the early 21st century. Hopefully in the course of this short paper I can convince you of these two arguments.

Before we talk about the DLP and Family First, I think it is important to remind ourselves of the roles and functions of minor parties in order to identify Family First, DLP and the other minor parties on the spectrum. Political scientists remind us that there are at least four categories of minor parties. The first is the doctrinal. These are, of course, the heavily ideological parties—the various communist parties, the fascist parties and so on. Another form of minor party might be the single issue party; that is, parties that are perhaps very ephemeral and that crop up very quickly—we might call them flash parties—to contest elections and to champion certain causes. The No GST Party and the No Aircraft Noise Party are examples. A very powerful one in the 1960s was DOGS—Defence of Government Schools—which, of course, has salience for our discussion on DLP, state aid to non-government schools and so on.

Political scientists tell us that there is a third type of minor party: the secessionist party. Of course, that is particularly germane to the DLP because the DLP was a classic secessionist party in the sense that it was a fragment party. It broke away from a parent group, of course from the Labor side of politics. There are also secessionist parties from the non-Labor side of politics—the Liberal Movement and the Australia Party in the mid-1960s right through to the early 1970s. Some of you would remember a fellow called Gordon Barton, who in 1966 was a small 'l' liberal inside the Liberal Party and so detested the Holt government's view on Vietnam that he dropped out of the Liberal Party and encouraged others to join him, to bring Australian servicemen home from Vietnam. Of course, he did not get too many takers and too many sympathisers within the Liberal Party itself, but lots of mums and dads in the suburbs certainly agreed with him. Certain small 'l' liberal, white-collar, middle-class professionals came on board and joined the Liberal Movement, which eventually morphed into the Australia Party.

The last kind of minor party is the protest party. This is probably the most recent variant of party. Again, it is sort of perhaps a flash organisation in the sense that a party will evolve in protest at something. It might be a pro-environment party or an antiglobalisation party. Perhaps One Nation might fall into this category. One Nation's agenda, of course, was very much antiglobalisation. I think it is important to bear in mind these types of minor parties in order for us to see where we are going in terms of identifying Family First or the DLP.

The other thing to remind ourselves of is that there is a lot of overlap between these types of parties. We say that the DLP was largely secessionist because it broke away from the ALP but, of course, it contained elements of doctrinism and issue as well. It was doctrinaire, for example, in its vehement anti-communism. As Dr Reynolds pointed out in his introduction, we talk to students these days who have no idea of how strong a motivator anti-communism was in Australian politics in the 1950s and 1960s. It was also an issue party in the sense that it pushed defence at every turn—a bit like the RSL, I suppose, in that you could never spend enough on defence.

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Family First also shares more than one characteristic. In one sense Family First is doctrinaire. It has, I suppose, a Christian ideology, if there is such a thing. It is also an issue party in the sense that it pushes things like anti-abortion, and it is a protest party perhaps protesting what it might consider the moral decay of the post-material society.

Going on, we should look at the effectiveness of minor parties. Again, Dr Reynolds talked about the role of minor parties in the Senate. We need to add to that and talk about the effectiveness of minor parties. Another political scientist, a fellow called Giovanni Sartori, talked about the relevancy and irrelevancy of minor parties, depending on their role and function, particularly in the party system, and particularly in the electoral system. Now, of course, there are lots of minor parties, and even very small parties which we might call microparties in the Australian system, most of which are totally ineffective, most of which garner only a handful of votes, and many of which are not even registered with the Australian Electoral Commission. But there are a few minor parties, of course, over time—I am looking only at the postwar period here, from the DLP onwards—that have had real sway, and—I think this is an important point—sway that was disproportionate to both the vote that they attracted and their membership bases: sway in terms of public policy; sway in terms of allocation of preferences.

But before we talk about the specifics of how, say, the DLP did this, I want to talk about the roles of minor parties in terms of the positive roles versus the negative roles. The negative roles are canvassed quite a lot, but let us note, for our own benefit, the positive roles that minor parties can bring. There is a sense that positive parties can bring a sense of pluralism to politics, to Australian democracy—they give the opportunity for people outside the major party system to participate in politics, and not just in a pressure group environment. So, minor parties in that sense are conducive to a pluralist democracy. We must ask ourselves: can we really imagine an Australian polity without minor parties? Most of us cannot. I am sure that there are a few people in the major parties who would like to, but most of us cannot really imagine it.

More commonly known is the negative role of the minor parties. We might call this a spoiler role, a blackmail role, or a dog-in-the-manger role—taking away from major parties what they themselves cannot have—in other words, the opportunity to form government. Again, Dr Reynolds mentioned this idea of being in a position to both reward and punish parties on their merits. The two most obvious ways they do this are, of course, the withholding of preferences and allocating of preferences in lower house seats—to a lesser extent, in the Senate as well—which can have quite unusual effects. We will talk about that later when we talk about the fact that Family First was elected on slightly more than one-tenth of a quota of primary votes. The second way in which they can do this is, of course, to hold the balance of power in an upper house, to block or allow certain legislation to pass.

This brings us back to one of my core theses, that the DLP was very good at each of these roles and that it has become a template for other parties to follow, even parties as disparate and diverse—polar opposites of the DLP—as the Greens and the Democrats. I think there are certain interesting and important parallels with Family First, but we will come back to that later on. Because this seminar is primarily about the DLP, I am going to spend a little bit of time talking about the DLP, particularly in late 1960s, which is an era particularly close to my heart in terms of research. We all know that the theme of this seminar is about the DLP keeping Labor out of office for 17 years from 1955 to 1972 by selectively allocating preferences against Labor candidates. Sometimes we forget that the DLP at least attempted, or threatened, to punish the coalition as well. Even Robert Menzies was not immune.

The DLP was often critical of Robert Menzies after 1955 for what it considered inadequate defence spending. Of course, inadequate defence spending would probably be anything under 50 per cent to the DLP; but it always chastised Menzies himself, and Menzies did not escape this criticism. But the DLP, as Dr Reynolds mentioned, really came into its own in the late sixties. In 1965 there was something known as Compact '65 in which members of the two houses, the lower house and the Senate, basically got together and held some sort of discussion about how to improve relations between the two houses. This was perhaps the thin end of the wedge for minor parties in the Senate.

But 1967 seems to have been a particularly important year for minor parties in the Senate, particularly for the DLP, for it was in that year that the DLP joined with other parties to vote to bring into existence eight new committees. They were not permanent standing committees of scrutiny, as they were after 1970, but they were committees with teeth nonetheless and they certainly breathed life into the Senate. 1967, of course, was also the year of two referenda. One, of course, was to allow the Commonwealth to legislate on Aboriginal affairs, which is something we have all heard of; the other, and one which is often forgotten, was a referendum to alter section 24 of the Constitution to break the nexus between the House of Representatives and the Senate, a nexus that still exists today, much to the chagrin of quite a few members of parliament in the lower house.

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I use this example because it is an extremely effective example of how the DLP nobbled what most people today would consider a very sensible proposition to alter what many people feel is a fairly silly clause of the Constitution. It came about in this way: the Holt government, as it was in 1967, ran a series of televised debates, as it were, and it was up to the DLP to stack the TV audience at the time, which it did quite effectively, in order to heckle various ministers as they made their case. This came across on live television, and it contributed quite significantly to the nexus referendum being ridiculed and to people being suspicious of it, and to the referendum going down—quite apart from the fact, of course, that if it does not enjoy bipartisan support it is always in trouble. This particular episode of the DLP nobbling the public debates was particularly telling and demonstrates the role of the DLP.

Let me mention another role of the DLP, again from 1967. If 1966 was the great zenith of Holt's fortunes, 1967 was the *annus horribilis*. In public opinion, Harold Holt's government really crashed through the floor. Part of this was due to the tabling of the VIP documents. This was a huge embarrassment to the government in 1967. It was, I suppose, the 'children overboard' scandal of its day. There were accusations from the ALP that government members had been misusing their VIP travel arrangements. Certain members in the Senate had asked the government to table these VIP flight documents to show who had been using what and where. The DLP was instrumental in voting with the opposition to get these documents tabled. The Liberal Party embarrassed itself because it said the documents did not exist. The Liberal Senate leader—a fellow called John Gorton who just happened to become Prime Minister sometime down the track—automatically produced these documents and said, 'Here they are.' In one foul stroke, John Gorton, by doing this, perhaps to offer succour to the DLP, embarrassed his own Liberal Prime Minister but carved out for himself an important leadership niche that only he could fill later on, after Harold Holt had drowned. But the important thing to remember is that the DLP played a very active role in undermining the credibility of the Holt government towards the end of 1967 in the days and weeks leading up to Holt's death.

Dr Reynolds has also talked about the torpedoing of the 1968 election plan. Again, this might seem like a minor point today, but it really did alter the course of Australian history. John Gorton really wanted an election in 1968. He came to office earlier that year and he really wanted an election in order to carve out his own mandate. He was an extremely popular Prime Minister in late 1968. By late 1969, when the election was due, he was a fairly unpopular Prime Minister; you might even say he was an extremely unpopular Prime Minister. He knew that he needed to strike while the iron was hot. Had he had his way and got an election in 1968, the Liberal-Country Party coalition would have been returned with a similar majority to that in 1966; the ALP would not have made the gains it did in 1969 in order to prepare it for victory in 1972; so the ALP might not have come to office until the mid-1970s or perhaps even the late 1970s. History was changed in the DLP's torpedoing of John Gorton's plans to have a 1968 election.

Another really powerful example of the DLP's power vis-a-vis the Liberal and Country parties is seen in relation to the so-called Freeth speech in August 1969. Gordon Freeth was an External Affairs Minister—what today we would call a Foreign Affairs Minister. Of course, the Liberal Party at that time was really bridging two divides. It was coming out of a Cold War liberalism and ready to embrace a more small 'l' Aquarian liberalism in which it had a new, fresh view of foreign affairs, something that the ALP might share. Gordon Freeth, who himself was the fairly conservative Liberal member for Forrest in Western Australia, made a speech which many people in the Liberal Party, some even in the Country Party, and certainly the Foreign Affairs officials, said was a very good speech, in which he said that Australians no longer had to be fearful of a Russian presence in the Indian Ocean. A fairly moderate speech to make, but for the DLP, this was the four horsemen of the apocalypse. It really was a disastrous thing to mention: how could anyone possibly not be afraid of the Soviet Union in the Indian Ocean right on our back door? The DLP began to undermine Gorton again from this point, going into the crucial months leading up to the 1969 election. Gorton was forced to backtrack on a lot of his rhetoric. Gorton had a reputation of being at least part of the time a dove in international relations. Some of you would know, for example, that when he first came to office, unilaterally he declared, without consulting his cabinet, 'There will be no replacement of the homecoming Third Battalion from Vietnam'—which is his admission to say, even before the United States had said it, 'This damned war is unwinnable.'

He also slashed defence spending in 1969 by 5 per cent because he wanted to spend it on health. Again, the DLP spat the dummy. They thought it was unconscionable and they demanded an increase in defence spending. They demanded an increase in the maintenance on military bases, most notably Cockburn Sound in Western Australia, and other concessions. Of course, John Gorton was a great advocate of what we call Fortress Australia, as opposed to 'forward defence'—the idea of looking after Australia's shores and not worrying about going into South-East Asia. So Gorton had to retract a lot of his rhetoric to that point and the consequence was that he was discredited in a lot of circles,

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particularly among swinging voters. The other problem was that it left a vacuum in the centre, or centre-left, of Australian politics, particularly in foreign policy, which the ALP very quickly filled.

My argument would be that the DLP played a very significant role in pushing the Liberal coalition unnecessarily to the right in the late 1960s, thereby giving the ALP a leg up. I interviewed John Gorton in 1998 and discussed any number of these issues with him, and I asked him his opinion of Vince Gair, for example, and he paused and gritted his teeth and said, 'He was a pretty difficult man.' I think he was probably being polite. Mind you, that was nothing compared with the language he used for William McMahon.

I do not want to talk only about the DLP and Family First. I want to cover the entire gamut. Let us talk about 25 years of Australian politics in 10 minutes. I want to talk a little about the Australian Democrats and how they have fulfilled this role as well. Perhaps it is a good time to talk about the Australian Democrats, given the sad passing of Janine Haines on the weekend. Of course, in terms of preference allocation the Democrats are an unusual case. They have been less dogmatic over the years in their preference allocation. In principle, they have always decided, or at least told us, that their preference allocation is in the hands of voters and often printed how-to-vote cards to that effect. In practice it has often been a different case. The point is that there is still a result-changing potential in the way that the Democrats allocate preferences. So in that sense they are fulfilling that DLP role as well.

The Democrats are also fulfilling that DLP template role in the sense that they have held the balance of power on a number of occasions and not always to the detriment of the government. We often think of holding the balance of power as being to the detriment of the government of the day, but the Democrats have given some cause of support and succour to the government. Most notably, when Howard first came to power in 1996 the Democrats supported a lot of the Howard workplace deregulation reforms. To the horror of the Howard government, the Democrats have been an opponent of watering down unfair dismissal laws for small business. They also successfully, and perhaps most famously, extracted the exemption of food from the GST in 1999. Since then they have been at the forefront of debate in terms of watering down the government's antiterrorism laws, Federal Police detention laws and migration zone excision laws.

Of course, the Australian Democrats today are a declining force. They lost three members at the last election and many speculate that they may even be absent from the Senate altogether after the 2007 election. If the Democrats are the minor party of yesterday, the Greens perhaps are the minor party of tomorrow. The Greens—again, perhaps being a mixed bag and being more dogmatic in the allocation of their preferences—have also fulfilled this DLP role of being a spoiler party.

The Greens' preferences will almost overwhelmingly go to the ALP, and even when they do not preference that on the card—there is only about a four per cent difference between where they preference and where they do not preference—second preferences go to the ALP, so the ALP is very happy with the way that the Greens preference. But on occasion they have even punished the ALP, most famously during the federal election—in Tasmania the Greens withheld preferences from the ALP—and in the 1995 Queensland state election, when the Greens withheld preferences from the ALP in a number of critical seats. They also had a positive effect—probably even a more effective role than the DLP—in Tasmania when the Greens actually formed a coalition of sorts. They like to use the word 'accord', but there was a Green-ALP coalition in Tasmania in the early 1990s.

Let us move on to Family First. Family First is already showing signs of slipping into this DLP template role very well in the sense of rewarding and punishing. Even though the party was established in only 2001 and even though it has had only its first federal electoral outing, there was enormous press coverage on one particular development, and that development was the withholding of preferences in the seat of Brisbane from the Liberal candidate, Dr Ingrid Tall, for no other reason than her sexuality. Lesser known was the withholding of preferences from the Liberal candidate in Leichhardt, Warren Entsch, for his support of gay marriages. It is important to note that neither of these cases of withholding preferences changed the result. The votes for Family First were small enough not to change the result. That is, the winning margins of both these candidates were larger than the Family First total. But obviously the precedent has been set and the potential is there.

Comparisons are inevitable. Let us compare the DLP and Family First. Is this out of left field? Are there any real comparisons between the DLP and Family First? Many people would say that there are not, so let us look at some contrasts. The first thing to note, of course, is that the Family First demographic is much smaller. It is a much smaller core voter base. The Pentecostal, evangelical, perhaps born-again, fundamental—there are lots of tags for these churches—Assemblies of God churches are much smaller, of course, than the great Catholic Church. That is the first and most important difference.

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Another difference is that the points of salience are different, and they are of greater or lesser value. Now let me explain. The issues that are close to Family First's heart in 2004—such issues as anti-abortion, anti embryonic stem cell research, anti gay marriage and so on—do not motivate the same sorts of passions in the broader community as anticommunism and state aid did in the 1950s and 1960s. That is not to belittle the anti-abortion debate—of course that stirs passions—but it really is difficult to overestimate the zeal with which people argued the case for anticommunism in the 1950s and 1960s. A lot of swinging voters are not terribly motivated by things like anti embryonic stem cell research, but a lot of swinging, apathetic voters in the 1950s and 1960s did have a very strong opinion on communism and the role of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, for example, in world affairs.

Another obvious difference is that the DLP shared the balance of power from time to time and Family First does not, given the recent majority of the Howard government. I add 'yet', as that may well change. Of course, the last difference is that the Family First party is not a secessionist party. Why is this important? It is important because there was always a view that the DLP would be absorbed back into the Labor Party 'if only they can heal this rift'. With Family First there is no rift to heal, so it is unlikely or virtually impossible for it to be absorbed by another party.

What are the comparisons between Family First and the DLP? The most obvious one is that it is very conservative—some people would say arch-conservative. Another comparison, obviously, is that it operates on a religious cleavage. We can also say in that vein that it can draw on church resources. This is important for the success and longevity of the party and is something denied, say, the Greens and particularly the Democrats, who are always struggling for money. After the last election the Democrats received a paltry \$8,000 because of their very poor primary vote. The Family First party received a great deal more and can draw on its Assemblies of God church resources.

From a political scientist's point of view, I suppose one of the most interesting and pertinent comparisons lies in the fact that each party enjoyed a regionalised vote. Dr Reynolds talked very extensively about the regionalised vote of the DLP, which was stronger in Queensland and Victoria particularly and much weaker in New South Wales. Family First is very strong in South Australia. In the last election, last month, it polled 4.3 per cent of the House of Representatives vote there, but in New South Wales it polled only 0.8 per cent. I think that is an important difference, and I think that will continue to be the case. It may change as more candidates are preselected and a difference mix of candidates is put forward, but I suspect that is going to be the pattern. Another comparison is that there is a strong potential to wedge the major parties. Of course, the DLP wedged on the issue of state aid and communism. The Family First party may in fact wedge the majors on stem cell research and abortion.

The last comparison is that there is a potential for growth there—growth in terms of vote and numbers. I think it is wrong to assume that the born-again or fundamentalist Christian Right sprang up over night in Australia. I suspect that it was already there. Certainly it has been growing in recent times, but it has been there. It is just that Family First, since its establishment in 2001, has been very clever at tapping into it. I think that potential for them to tap into it will continue to grow. If for no other reason, it may grow as a repository, as it were, of people who are disenchanted with the major parties, in the same way that people voted for One Nation. People who are not necessarily even religious but who want to drop out of the major party system may look at the name Family First and think, 'That's a pretty innocuous, lovely-sounding name. I will give them my primary vote.'

What conclusions can we draw from all of this? I think the first one is that Family First will probably prove more durable than, say, One Nation, and I say that for a couple of reasons. The first is that Family First has jumped onto the same economic bandwagon as have the mainstream parties. Family First is not antiglobalisation. It wants to operate within the modern, free market system. One Nation immediately marginalised itself when it talked about bringing an end to globalisation. That is like trying to nail jelly to a wall; you just cannot do it. Globalisation is here to stay. A second reason Family First is probably going to be more durable than One Nation is that it has a much more easily-defined voter base. In that sense, it may even prove more effective than the Democrats—because it is ideological and people can identify with it quite easily.

Another conclusion—it is probably very bold but I will say it nonetheless—is that perhaps we should be questioning the view obtained in the last couple of decades that we have come to the end of history or we have come to the end of ideology. Some of you will be familiar with the Daniel Bell and Francis Fukuyama theses that say that the great ideological debates have been fought and won, that we do not have to worry about ideology any more, that we are all liberal democrats and isn't it a wonderful thing, or that we all believe in certain civil liberties and isn't that a wonderful thing? But I suspect that there will be anew ideological divide. It will not be one based on class or economics; it will be one based

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on moral and ethical questions. Again, stem cell research is shaping up to be just that. In the last couple of days, we have seen John Howard indicate that Australia now may oppose totally anything to do with stem cell research, whereas previously he gave a fairly soft commitment along the lines that 'we will oppose it for certain things but not for base research such as research on spinal cord injury'.

Let me finish up by talking about the challenges facing Family First. They are pretty much the same as the challenges facing any minor party. The first is one of leadership. We have all seen the debacle that the Democrats have found themselves in, partly but not solely because of leadership woes. Will Family First go the same way as the Democrats in that they have a strong extra-parliamentary organisation beginning to dictate to its parliamentary members? Will Stephen Fielding, the parliamentarian, be able to work with Andrea Mason, a powerful figure from South Australia who is not in the parliament? How those two reconcile their working relationship may well seal the fate of Family First.

A second challenge for Family First is one of self-definition. The DLP often—not always but often—liked to describe itself as a party of Catholics. It never liked to describe itself as a Catholic party. I hope that Family First is the same. It does not want to be described as a Christian party. It would like to be described as a party of Christians who have other things on their political agenda. How they broaden that base and appeal to voters outside the Assemblies of God congregations is also key to their future.

A third challenge is how they engage with other parties. Again, this is central to the minor party role. With whom are they going to exchange preferences? How far are they willing to negotiate on contentious policy like the policy on stem cell research? That is going to shape their longevity.

The last thing to note is how well they resist the 'loony Right' tag. I think they have done this relatively well. Family First managed to dissociate itself from the Fred Nile types, the Festival of Light types or the Call to Australia types. I think that was a fairly significant contributing factor to their fairly decent and respectable primary vote in the lower house in October. For example, Family First got slightly over two percent the lower house. Compare that with the Christian Democrats, who scored only 0.6 per cent. That is still not as good as the ALP Anti-Communists, which of course was the first version of the DLP at its first outing in 1955. They scored 5.1 per cent. But to score two per cent at your very first federal electoral outing is not too bad at all. I suspect that the evidence that I have cited here does suggest that Family First may well be the DLP of the early 21st century. Thank you.

**Ms MALONE:** Thank you very much, Paul, for so effectively bringing us through 25 years and more of Australian politics to 2004 and even beyond, and for so ably rounding off the discussion, from Paul Reynolds's retrospect of the DLP, through Colleen's reflections on her interview with B.A. Santamaria and on the social context in which the DLP developed, right through to the present day.

I had intended to invite Manfred Cross and Dick Healy to provide their reflections and perspectives on this, but I do feel we have run out of time. We have enjoyed a great feast this evening, and I would ask if both Manfred and Dick would indulge us and allow me to interview them on their perspectives on the discussion tonight a little later and append a transcript of their reflections to the transcript that we post of this evening's proceedings. Would you be amenable to that? Thank you so much.

I would now like to call on John Pike to give a vote of thanks to the three speakers who have entertained us and informed us so well this evening.

Mr Pike: A couple of the other committee members asked me to move a vote of thanks. I thought, 'Well, why me? I wasn't taught by Paul Reynolds. I am not, nor have I ever been, a Catholic.' But my memory does go back a long way. All of the things they were talking about—there were names mentioned that I have not thought of for years—when mentioned suddenly came back to me, and I found it all quite fascinating. All of the discussion tonight has been premised on the presupposition that the DLP has completely disappeared from the scene, but it has not quite. I think it is only constitutional lawyers—like Geoffrey Fisher and me—who have actually been keeping track of what has been happening to it in the last year or two.

It has remained registered as a political party, but about two years ago the electoral office, either by a random selection process or acting on suspicion, asked them under the relevant section of the Electoral Act to provide their proof that they still had 500 members. They chose not to do this but, instead, chose to take court action seeking a declaration that the relevant section of the Electoral Act was invalid on the basis that it interfered with their freedom of participation in the political process and, therefore, indirectly with everybody else's right of direct choice at elections.

They failed before a single judge of the Federal Court. They then failed again unanimously before a full bench of the Federal Court. Just a few weeks ago they sang their last hurrah—it may turn out to

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be—in the High Court. The High Court ruled unanimously that their challenge was ineffective. They now have, I guess, two choices. The factual situation provides them with no choice. Their only choice is to try to provide to the AEC their evidence that they have 500 members.

I think most of us suspect that the reason they have taken this challenge to the validity of the section is not a matter of high principle but is that they cannot in fact provide a list of 500 members to the AEC. The High Court challenge gave them enough breathing space so that they could actually contest the Senate election one last time—I think it is going to be one last time, although we may yet all be surprised.

They ran just one Senate team in Victoria, led by the same Mr Mulholland who has been the name behind the sequence of court cases. They got about one and a quarter per cent, but then their one and a quarter per cent and the Fred Nile Christian democrats' one and a fraction per cent cascaded on to Family First with their one and a half per cent, thus pushing Family First up to a total of about five per cent, getting them ahead of the Labor Party surplus. They then benefited from the Labor Party's decision to put Family First ahead of the Greens. So it is not just the Labor Party's extraordinary preference decisions that will put Steve Fielding in the Senate from next July; it is also one of the last acts, possibly the last act, of the DLP in staying alive long enough to contest this year's Senate election. So Family First may be the heirs of the DLP in more ways than you were suggesting.

Having taken shameless advantage of the invitation to move the vote of thanks just to put in that little epilogue, let me now briefly propose a vote of thanks. The two Pauls and the one and only Colleen have engaged us in their own different ways, from very different perspectives and one very personal perspective with resonances of her own family history. How many of the rest of us share the stories of the uncle or aunt or great-uncle or great-aunt who married a Catholic and was never spoken to again? There is certainly one such story in my own family background, as I suspect there are in many others. If you are Catholics, you will have the story of an uncle or an aunt who married a Protestant and was never spoken to again.

Paul Reynolds's interesting summaries of his political-sociological researches into just where the DLP voters came from and Paul Williams's attempt to tie it all in and present parallels with the current religious based party are different from each other and are all equally interesting. We have all thanked them individually as they finished speaking, but I think it is appropriate that we thank them collectively one more time.

**Ms MALONE:** Thank you very much, John, for the vote of thanks and also for assuring us that the last rites have not yet been performed.

**Mr Pike:** There may yet be an Irish wake.

**Ms MALONE:** There may be. Before we close, I would like to draw to your attention a forthcoming conference to be held in Parliament House in Melbourne called 'The Great Labor Split of 1955: Fifty Years Later'—another anniversary. This conference is to be held on 5 and 6 April. Should anybody want further details of that, please contact me.

It falls to me now to finish the formal proceedings. I would sincerely like to thank the Speaker, the Hon. Ray Hollis, for providing the venue for us this evening and for his constant and ongoing support of ASPG organisation and functions. I would also like to express my thanks to Hansard, which has recorded the proceedings this evening. I would like to thank you all very much for attending. We look forward to your future support. I invite you all to join us now for refreshments in the Belle Vue room, in the Parliamentary Annexe. Good evening.