

COMMUNIQUE

LESSONS OF BROADMEADOWS

STEPHEN DONNELLY, LABOR UNITY SECRETARIAT

National Conference...should restrict the current unrestrained ability of the Party's executives at all levels to deprive members of a preselection ballot.

That was a statement from the 2010 National Review, conducted by Steve Bracks, Bob Carr and John Faulkner. The day after the review's February release, Frank McGuire was elected the Labor member for Broadmeadows. Now media interest has lapsed, the nature of Mr McGuire's preselection deserves some reflection.

As most know, the ruling group on the ALP National Executive voted to approve Mr McGuire's party membership application and prevent a fair preselection process in Broadmeadows. Mr McGuire was formally preselected without the vote of a local ballot or the Public Office Selection Committee (POSC).

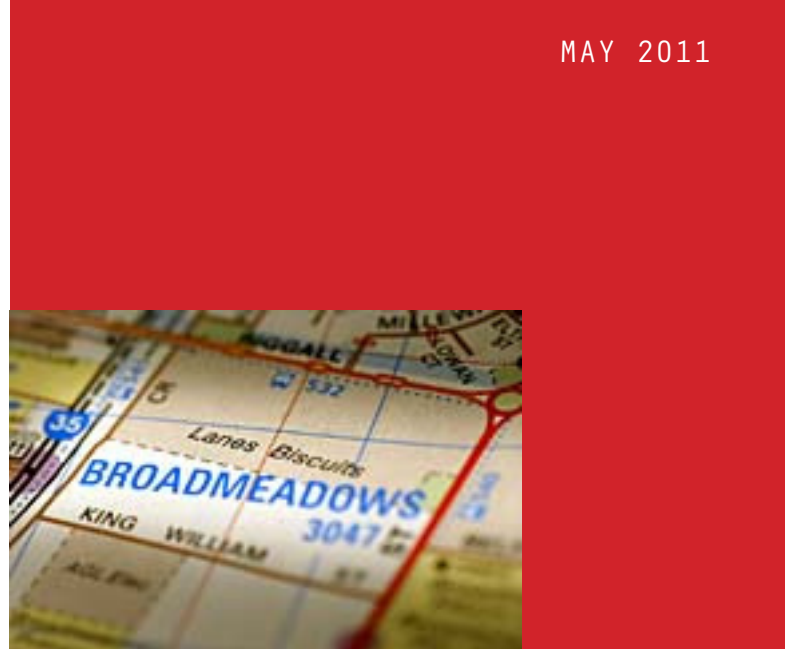
With his background, there is no doubt Mr McGuire will prove a commendable parliamentarian. We only wish that local members in the seat of Broadmeadows and elected members of the POSC had a chance to make that decision themselves - a vote they haven't cast for 26 years.

When it became clear the ruling group were avoiding a fair preselection, Labor Unity decided to take a stand. This was not about patronage, this was about process. To us, it was a debate about a ruling group's capacity to reliably deploy its members on National Executive so that it must always prevail.

The decision to override a local ballot was referred to the ALP National Executive. The ruling group's Socialist Left members bound in support of the decision, the National Right was divided, and the motion to disenfranchise party members was carried.

McGuire's candidacy convulsed the Labor Party and divided the National Right caucus. Its architects not only embarked upon a strategy disproportionate to its goal, but they did not concern themselves with the collateral damage to our party this behaviour would carry.

"SOCIALIST LEFT MEMBERS OF THE RULING GROUP ONCE CONSIDERED PARTY DEMOCRACY A THEME SONG"



MAY 2011

Local and POSC ballots are essential if we are to remain a fair and representative party in Opposition. We cannot override democratic provisions, and we cannot risk any more isolation from our party's grassroots base. This has always been a guiding principle of the Right in Victoria.

Party democracy is the ideal that groups either find consensus or permit an election. It is the ideal of fair representation and rank-and-file participation. In Victoria, party democracy is not dead - it's just in a coma. It remains at threat by a ruling group with little respect for Labor tradition.

Socialist Left members of the ruling group once considered party democracy a theme song. But on the National Executive, the Socialist Left voted to impose a candidate upon members who had demanded their voices be heard. In a previous life, other members of the ruling group were also advocates of party democracy. Indeed, some were preselected in 2006 by the very process they now seek to override.

At Admin, the Socialist Left urged that when selecting a candidate, it is important to strike a balance between the will of local members and the broader party. They're right - that's why we have a local vote, coupled with a central panel, at an equal weighting. In this case, they dodged their own convictions.

What were they running from? This is a ruling group that will pull any trick to avoid a ballot. They are troubled by the scrutiny and pressure of an internal election, and they are fearful of any result that publicly exposes their tenuous control. The Kororoit experience still shakes them at their core.

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Welcome to the first edition of the new Labor Unity Communique.

Successful politics relies on successful communication. The Labor Unity Communique has a strong tradition of communicating with moderate members of the Labor Party in Victoria and the new Communique aims to maintain this tradition. It's a platform for members of the Labor Unity Broad Group to participate in the wider policy debate.

There is never a dull moment in the ALP. Between election wins and losses are moments of contention and debate. We need avenues to express opinions in an open and transparent forum, providing rank and file party members with the opportunity to contribute.

The reform of our party structure - how we campaign, formulate policies and preselect candidates - will all be debated over the coming years. It's important that moderate ALP members have a strong influence on this debate.

The Communique will not only inform members of what is happening in the ALP. It will help moderate ALP members shape our party into the future. In this edition, we discuss the fallout from the Broadmeadows preselection, the labour movement's fight over Easter Sunday, the battle over Young Labor and changes to federal electorate boundaries. We hope you enjoy.

Labor Unity secretariat

STATE REPORT

BAILLIEU'S AGENDA

JAALA PULFORD MLC

These conservative Governments can be a pretty predictable lot. Last week the Baillieu Government handed down its first budget. Funding has been scrapped for Jobwatch after 30 years of bipartisan support and advocacy groups like Environment Victoria are having funding cut.

Election promises to make our teachers the best paid and to support the pay equity test case for low paid workers have been abandoned in the rush to fund a multitude of "feasibility studies". Even the \$1 billion regional fund has only \$500 million in it.

Labor has been proudly defending our strong record on economic management. The Bracks and Brumby Governments delivered eleven surplus budgets, maintained our AAA credit rating and supported strong jobs growth. By contrast the 2011/12 budget is riddled with broken promises and lost opportunities for Victoria.

For a detailed look at the budget, check out Shadow Treasurer, Tim Holding's budget reply speech in the Victorian ALP's news, events and media web page.

The Government has finally begun to outline a legislative agenda. The Shop Trading (Easter Sunday) law was rushed through Parliament in the dead of night. This meant that for many retail workers Easter Sunday in 2011 was just an ordinary trading day – without public holiday penalty rates.

In coming weeks Parliament will debate Equal Opportunity Amendment laws which will seek to undo many progressive reforms made by the Brumby Government.

The Legislative Council is very different in this Parliament. The Greens Party no longer holds the balance of power, and we watch the conservatives' enthusiasm for having a robust house of review disappear before our eyes. Our new Senate-style committee system will provide scrutiny if allowed to function as intended in all-Party negotiations in the last Parliament, but on this we may have to wait and see.

In the Parliament and in the community we continue to scrutinise every action or inaction of the Baillieu government, and like the rest of Victoria, continue to wonder what they really stand for.

Jaala can be contacted on Jaala.pulford@parliament.vic.gov.au, www.twitter.com/jaalapulford or at www.facebook.com/jaalapulford

UNION REPORT

LIBS IGNORE WORKERS
ON EASTER SUNDAY

MICHAEL DONOVAN



On Easter Sunday this year most people were enjoying their Easter break.

But, sadly, this year retail workers in Victoria had to get up early and go to work. They did not get paid public holiday penalty rates because Easter Sunday is not a declared public holiday.

Good Friday is a public holiday, Easter Saturday is a public holiday and Easter Monday is a public holiday. But Easter Sunday is not.

Traditionally shops have been required to shut on Easter Sunday, effectively giving retail workers the day off (like a public holiday).

Shops are required to shut on Easter Sunday in substantial parts of the Western world – London, Paris, Rome, Milan, Montreal, New Zealand and all other mainland States of Australia.

The new Baillieu Government decided to open shops on Easter Sunday in Victoria but gave no consideration at all to the interests of the workers who were going to have their Easter break disrupted.

The Minister Louise Asher declined to meet with me to hear the concerns of retail workers.

The Labor Party opposed the legislation and moved two amendments in the Upper House. One amendment sought to make opening on Easter Sunday conditional on voluntary work on the day so that employees have a choice. The second amendment was to make Easter Sunday a public holiday.

The Liberals and Nationals opposed both amendments. Incredibly, they argued a technical point that making Easter Sunday a public holiday was not the same subject matter as opening shops on Easter Sunday. Therefore the amendment was out of order. This airbrushed over 200,000 retail workers out of existence.

We will continue the campaign to make Easter Sunday a public holiday for workers in all industries.

Michael Donovan is the Secretary of the SDA Victorian Branch

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The ruling group may give token gestures toward party democracy in the future, but only when an outcome is predetermined in their favour. True advocates of party democracy will never shirk from a ballot, and legitimate candidates for Labor preselection will always be prepared to face a vote of their local members.

From Kororoit to Broadmeadows, this generation of Labor Unity has always fought for the member's voice, and we will always expect our candidates to face the scrutiny of a ballot. We support party democracy because we acknowledge the grassroots nature of our movement cannot be allowed to wither.

While Labor Unity has a commitment to repair the damaging split, the Broadmeadows experience has shown there are some people in our party who will attempt anything for control. However, a winner-takes-all environment will only harm this party, its leaders and its representatives.

Most importantly, the ALP must honour its obligation to local members. Why join the party if a democratic ideal asserted throughout its history is dispensed with? No amount of Kilsyth 'primary experiments' or Head Office 'internet community forums' can substitute.

To give our party the best chance in forthcoming Federal and State elections, Labor Unity must keep fighting for the Right we remember: a faction that supports party members, a faction that understands fair representation, and a faction that's not afraid of a ballot.

CAMPAIGNS

NSW ELECTION

NATHAN LAMBERT

In February and March, about thirty members of Victorian Labor went to work on the NSW state election. As everyone knows, it was a tough election where Labor faced inevitable defeat. Many thought we were crazy to volunteer. But this article sets out a few reasons why it was good to head to NSW.

Firstly, there was the political imperative. Nobody who cared for New South Wales wanted to see Barry O'Farrell get a 30-seat majority instead of a 15-seat one. The electorate had serious misgivings about the Coalition. Would they weaken protection for workers? Would they trash the state's planning laws? We needed to make the case for a good opposition who would hold the new government to account.

Second, the fight in 2011 was genuinely a fight for a new Labor Party. When Kristina Keneally said she was leading a new team, she was serious. The majority of the 2007/08 Lemma Ministry had gone -- 13 out of 22. In their place were a raft of new Labor candidates, many from outside Labor's traditional stomping grounds. There was a real sense that the branch had moved on from the bad old days of selfishness, treachery and "whatever it takes" and had committed itself to working and rebuilding together.

Third, the campaign wasn't that tough. Everyone will have their war stories -- of doors slammed in faces and life-long Labor voters tearing up HTVs. But never were you so grateful for those who still said "Don't worry, I'm Labor". And in reality, most voters were more disappointed than angry. Joe Hildebrand of the Daily Telegraph captured the mood when he said voters didn't want to kick the dog, just quietly put a bullet in it. In many traditional Labor seats, voters were getting their first opportunity to vote in a close contest and were more than happy to talk about the issues that mattered to them and their families.

Another reason for volunteering in NSW was that a lot of good NSW volunteers had come down and campaigned for the Brumby Government in November 2010. They had thrown their heart and soul into tough contests that had turned into tougher defeats, and it was good to show solidarity in their time of need.

The NSW election was also a chance to check out their campaign finance reforms. The new NSW laws cap each party's expenditure in an electorate at \$100,000. Similar laws have been adopted in Queensland. Whatever you think of them, they have a marked impact on local campaigning: dramatically increasing

the importance of "bang for buck" and making volunteers even more important. To their credit, NSW state office saw the dire electoral circumstances as an opportunity to experiment with new techniques. Victorian volunteers learnt much that they can use in 2014 and beyond.

Finally, volunteering in NSW was a good opportunity to think further about reform of our own party. Many of the things that concern members of the Victorian Branch -- the loss of support in non-English speaking neighbourhoods, the threat of the Greens, the decreasing number of volunteers -- were on show in NSW on an unprecedented scale. It is probably fair to say that seeing the NSW election up close made Victorian volunteers hungrier for certain reforms, but also warier of others. Not every reform can be justified by the so-called "NSW disease". It's worth remembering that the NSW Government had a AAA credit rating and a budget surplus. In its sixteen years in office, it had rebuilt most of the hospitals in the state, built a good ring road system and cleaned up the notoriously corrupt NSW police. Some of the things that went wrong in the final term were due to individuals and not a broader malaise.



JOHN ROBERTSON'S FIRST PRESSER

And one more reason for volunteering in NSW? The bright red "Kristina Keneally -- Fairness for Families" tees that will no doubt be a hit at political costume parties for years to come.

Hopefully this article shows some of the advantages of volunteering interstate. Many thanks to the Victorian Branch for helping subsidise transport costs and to the party members in New South Wales who provided generous accommodation and hospitality.

Nathan Lambert is the Assistant State Secretary of the Victorian ALP.

POLICY

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

LIZZIE BLANDTHORN

While the Platform for the 2010 state election was the culmination of many years of work by Policy Committees and the Parliamentary Labor Party, its development exposed some fundamental weaknesses in our processes.

There are fourteen individual policy committees which each comprise of twenty elected members, as well as associate members and parliamentary representatives. Some consider very specific policy areas, others are broad ranging.

Over time, it has become extremely difficult to ensure that we elect twenty members to each committee who have the necessary experience, commitment and time to fully participate in the policy development process. This has meant that many committee members have become frustrated by uninformed and unstructured policy debate and/or the poor attendance of fellow committee members - in- quorate meetings are by no means uncommon!

Furthermore, Head Office has not adequately resourced policy committees for many years now. And, while some members of the parliamentary party and government staffers have actively engaged in the policy development process, others have regarded it with disdain.

The last major review of Victorian policy committees was the Maxwell review, 15 years ago. We've learnt a lot since then, both about our own structures and policy reform nationally. There is a desperate need to review the policy development process. It needs to be more participatory and better informed.

Now is the appropriate time in the policy development cycle to review the ALP's policy making structures. Rule 8.5.1 states that State Conference may create, reconstitute and abolish Policy Committees as it considers necessary, and determine the number of members to be elected by State Conference and the Parliamentary Labor Party respectively.

To this end, an urgency motion is being put forward to State Conference calling for a committee of review.

The Committee of Review should give consideration to:

1. Maximising member participation in the policy making process.
2. Maximising affiliate participation in the policy making process.
3. Ensuring that member and affiliate participation in the policy making process is connected with any policy development processes established by the Parliamentary Labor Party.
4. Ensuring that expert knowledge and advice informs policy decision making at all levels.
5. Establishing a policy development structure that can more effectively carry out the responsibilities with which it is charged. In particular, the Committee will give consideration to the establishment of a structure that has a greater capacity to ensure quorate meetings that can make timely decisions.
6. The fact that State Conference is, and should remain, the final arbiter on all policy making decisions.

Policy Committees are up for re-election at this state conference and while we are hoping to achieve consensus as to the best policy development structure going forward, for now it remains important to continue to be involved. Nomination forms are due 12 noon on Monday 16th.

Lizzie is the Senior Vice President of the Victorian ALP. She can be contacted for more information about committees on 0410 524 217.



RULES

REDISTRIBUTIONS

RAFF CICCONE

Last year, the Australian Electoral Commission completed the redistribution of all federal electoral boundaries in Victoria. Victoria's entitlement remained unchanged at 37 members in the House of Representatives.

In some Federal Electorate Assemblies (FEA's) however, the redistribution has had a significant effect on local members' electoral residency and their respective local branches.

On the 17th February 2011 the Administrative Committee resolved that all members whose federal electorate location has changed due to the redistribution and all affected local branches be informed of this change and invited to submit their views to the State Secretary by 24th March 2011.

The Redistribution Membership Committee has been established to deal with those effects. The redistribution membership review process is guided by the Principles and Protocols adopted by the Administrative Committee.

An affected branch is defined as one for which one or more of the following apply:

- More than 25% and/or 20 branch members will not reside in the same FEA after the redistribution as they resided in before the redistribution.
- A branch has less than 5 members either before the redistribution or after the redistribution.
- There has been movement of local branch members into or out of an FEA as a result

of the redistribution of more than 20% of the former total number of local branch members in the FEA.

26 submissions were received by the Redistribution Membership Committee.

The Redistribution Membership Committee provided its final report to a special meeting of the Administrative Committee on 5th May 2011, which finalised the new branch structure for each FEA.

Following the adoption of the final report, the State Secretary will write to all affected members supplying them with a list of branches in their new FEA to which the member is eligible to transfer.

Members will need to ensure they submit their new branch preference to ALP Head Office by 27th May 2011. The new branch structure will commence on 8th June 2011.

Fresh elections for affected Branch Executives will also be required where:

- A new branch has been established or existing branches have merged;
- A branch has been transferred to a new FEA; or
- Branches which have been retained in their FEA and have lost 2 or more members of their Executive due to the redistribution.

Raff is on Agenda Committee and a state conference delegate for Chisholm FEA

INTERNATIONAL

U.S. PRIMARIES

TONY KENT

Last week saw the first televised debate of the Republican Presidential Primary season. Typically, this occasion is the party's starting pistol. But this year, it's their distress beacon. The debate's attendees amounted to a rogue's gallery, and its conspicuous absences spoke clearer than anyone present. The week's polls showed three different frontrunners in seven days - one who won't run, one who is wedded to President Obama's healthcare plans, and one who is Donald Trump. Perhaps the greatest indictment, the only contender beating President Obama in polling match-ups is named 'Generic Republican'.

It could all seem like the party is fated; that Obama will take this home by unforced error. But parties facing Presidential incumbents are always short of volunteers. In 1992, all the big names fell away as George Bush Snr rode a polling wave. The Democrats were lumped with an obscure Southern governor who, wearing scandal like a crisp suit, made the most of his opportunity. Turns out he was the greatest politician of his generation, a point lost on today's field of Republican hopefuls. The party of Lincoln is now turning to a cast of freaks and geeks, and those Republicans who could actually beat President Obama seem to be sitting this one out, tagging in unworthy players who'll sit a gaffe or two away from the Oval Office.

The 'missing in action' category is crowned by Republican Governor of New Jersey, Chris Christie. He's the knockabout, straight-shooting Governor of the Springsteen State, a folk hero about whom the Republican apparatus have commissioned a number of short films. Social democrats like us would be inclined to hate his politics, yet want to go bowling with him. He's ruled himself out of the game. As has erstwhile Texan secessionist Rick Perry, the state's longest serving Governor. Once a Democrat, he sniffed the wind and ratted in the 80s. He boasts a clean budget record and Ray Martin's hair. Either Christie or Perry would win a Presidential election in 2012, but neither will budge.

The talent vacuum has been left unfilled by declared candidates. Mitt Romney is the frontrunner with an asterisk and a ticking time bomb. He's lifeless and inconsistent, and the White House keeps cheekily thanking him for providing the model for the President's health care reforms, detested among Republicans. There are hangovers from 2008 — Sarah Palin and Mike Huckabee — both who are having too much fun and making too much money to ever consider running. There's Michelle Bachman, a Sarah Palin-lite with even less knowledge of geography. There's Newt Gingrich and Rick Santorum - the 'I used to be a star' bloc. There's a CEO of a pizza chain, there's someone who works for the Obama administration, and there's The Donald.

Two candidates in this tier — one declared, one prospective — have a decent shot at both a Primary and a General. Tim Pawlenty is a painfully boring Mid-Western Governor who, in compensating, has taken to dressing up his campaign ads like a Die Hard movie. He's a chance because, with every other candidate bearing a fatal flaw, he'll be everyone's least-worst pick. Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels - a bald and professorial technocrat with a gift for retail politics - is the field's most credible candidate, but Republicans have looked askance at his call for a 'truce' on social issues. Swings and roundabouts, but what's certain is this: The GOP field is spooked and contorted, everyone is jumping at shadows, and no one's polling higher than the teens. This is the bit where we enjoy it.



Palin and Huckabee "having too much fun and making too much money to ever consider running"



YOUNG LABOR

THE SPLIT

MICHAEL DE BRUYN

In 2009, when a minority of senior party Labor Unity members left our broad group and entered into a so-called 'stability agreement' with the Socialist Left, Young Labor Unity (YLU) immediately passed a resolution to stay together and continue to operate as one broad group under one convenor.

This arrangement continued with no real problems but failed at its first test: the 2011 Victorian Young Labor Conference held at the AMWU in April. Prior to Conference, rumours had circulated of a deal between a minority element of YLU and the Young Labor Left. This supposed deal aimed to comfortably supplant YLU's majority status in Young Labor with a replication of the senior party's 'Left-Right' ruling group.

Within YLU, I had the support of over 70% of delegates to be pre-selected as the group's candidate for Young Labor President. This figure included a number of delegates not aligned to our group in the senior party. This wasn't enough for YLU's minority element. They refused to accept any negotiating consensus with the rest of their group, despite countless compromises made to them on our part – including their election to co-convenor, secretary of Young Labor and National Conference Delegate.

The seams manifested at Conference when this minority element refused to wear the united faction's t-shirts, wearing instead promotional shirts for the AWU Firefighters. The split was confirmed when, at a Conference caucus discussing preselections, members of the minority element literally walked out the door.

The deal the YLU splitters signed prior to Conference with the Young Labor Left pledges support to Shannon Threlfall-Clarke for Young Labor President, and a member of the Left for the crucial position of Secretary. The deal also requires the former members of YLU to sign over entire quotas for executive positions to the Left, positions the latter could never have obtained outside the fallout of a divided Right.

What unfolded at the subsequent ballot was a disgrace. Young delegates were pressured to vote along senior party lines based upon their workplace and their FEA. This pressure was applied by senior factional operatives and elected MPs - something unseen in Young Labor, usually a forum where such divisions are inoculated.

At this point in time, the ballot has yet to be counted. We have lodged a number of issues with the Victorian Disputes Tribunal, and are currently seeking an outcome before the count proceeds. However, it is clear the practitioners of the Young Labor 'stability deal' can not claim clear success. The result is too close to call, and barring a negotiated solution, will be decided by dispute. It seems the dealmakers' utter confidence in their numbers was misled.

For now, the majority of YLU are committed to resolving the dispute. We have offered a hand of peace and invited all current and past members to attend our caucus and participate as usual. Unfortunately, there remains a bloc of former members who are committed to the split's continuance, at all levels. Until then, YLU will keep fighting for a united Right, and will never aid and abet Socialist Left power games and inflated representation in the party.

Michael is the Convenor of Young Labor Unity, and the outgoing Secretary of Victorian Young Labor

QUIZ

1. What is Malcolm Fraser's middle name?
2. Who holds Victorian Labor's most marginal Assembly seat?
3. Who was the Member for Scullin before Harry Jenkins?
4. Who was Labor's longest serving federal leader?
5. Barack Obama is the 44th President. How many people have served as President?
6. Which sitting Federal Labor MP has been ejected from the House more times than any other since 1901?
7. Who was the ALP National Secretary during the 1993 election?
8. Who is the new Taoiseach (Prime Minister) of Ireland?
9. Which successor of Winston Churchill is considered among the United Kingdom's worst Prime Ministers?
10. Which Victorian seat was Labor's only gain in the 2001 Federal election?

Answers: (1) Malcolm, (2) Steve Herbert, (3) Harry Jenkins, (4) Gough Whitlam, (5) '33, (6) Anthony Albanese, (7) Bob Hogg, (8) Enda Kenny, (9) Anthony Eden, (10) Ballarat

NOTICEBOARD

POLICY COMMITTEES

Nominations close Monday 16 May at 12pm

LU BROAD GROUP

6.30pm, 17 May
NUW, 833 Bourke St, Docklands

STATE CONFERENCE

Saturday 21 May, Monash University
LU Caucus begins 8am at the Rotunda
Credentialing begins 8.30
in Robert Blackwood Hall

LABO(U)R SCHOOL

Applications are now open for the 2011 labour movement internship program
contact Jon Barlow 0430 545 874

laborunity@gmail.com