

LIBERAL PARTY ORGANISATION IN VICTORIA

1945 - 68

by

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This thesis is my original work.

A party is not just a group of office-seekers, a body of men agreed upon principles, an electoral machine, a social group or an institution by means of which individuals realize personal ambitions; it is all these things in part and simultaneously.

Richard Rose,
Politics in England,
London, 1965, p.140.

PREFACE

This thesis is a study of the Liberal Party's extra-parliamentary organisation in Victoria between 1945 and 1968. The first section provides an introductory chapter and an historical background. Thus, Chapter 2 surveys the development of non-Labor organisation in Victoria from 1910 to 1940, while Chapter 3 gives a more detailed account of the decay of the organisation of the Liberal Party's immediate predecessor - the United Australia Party - and of the moves in 1943 and 1944 to form a new party. The second section of the thesis looks at the structure and functioning of the Liberal Party's extra-parliamentary institutions and their relation with the parliamentary wing since 1945. Chapters 5 to 9 examine such aspects of organisation as the size and distribution of party membership, the recruitment of members and their roles, the location, structure and activities of branches, and the composition and role of the party's central and auxiliary organs. Chapters 10 to 13 are concerned with the way in which the organisation has performed its main functions of selecting parliamentary candidates, contesting elections, and shaping party policy.

In giving a systematic explanatory account of the party's organisation, four inter-related sets of factors are of prime importance. These may be labelled 'structural', 'political', 'behavioural', and 'sociological'. The first refers to the party's formal institutions and rules, its established procedures and the organisational doctrines and party norms which validate these. The 'political' factor comprises the

exigencies of state and federal politics - the rival parties and the issues, events and personalities to which the party must continually adjust. The third factor, dubbed 'behavioural', involves the highly differentiated nature of participation within a voluntary party organisation. Political activities are undertaken, with varying amounts of dedication and for widely differing motives, by people possessing diverse political skills and resources. The members themselves thus constitute an important variable in the functioning of political parties. Lastly, the 'sociological' factor includes the class and demographic characteristics of party members, and the varied suburban and rural environments in which the organisation functions.

Two terminological usages should be noted. First, for simplicity and consistency throughout the thesis I have referred to the party as the Liberal Party or the Victorian Liberal Party, although between 1949 and 1965 the Victorian Division was officially named the Liberal and Country Party. When the title Victorian Liberal Party is used, it should not be confused with the short-lived 'rebel' party of the same name led by T.T. Hollway between 1954 and 1955. Secondly, the generic term 'non-Labor' as used here excludes the Country Party and refers collectively or individually to the Liberal Party and its lineal predecessors - the first Liberal Party, the Nationalist Party, and the U.A.P.

Currency is expressed according to contemporary usage, that is, as pounds and shillings until 1966 and in decimal form thereafter.

Unless otherwise indicated, all electoral statistics are from Colin A. Hughes and B.D. Graham, A Handbook of Australian Government and Politics, Canberra, 1968.

Methods of citation in the footnotes and bibliography are based on examples in Commonwealth Government Printer, Style Manual For Authors and Printers of Australian Government Publications, Canberra, 1966, pp.40-46.

As a guide to the location of electorates referred to in the text, maps showing federal divisions, 1955-68, and state districts, 1965, are included as Appendix C.

Research for the thesis included approximately six months field work in Victoria. During this time I was able to interview former members of organisations associated with the U.A.P., discuss party procedures with present members, and observe party institutions in action. The latter included branches, the State Council, the Young Liberals' Central Council, an annual meeting of the Liberal Speakers Group and a pre-selection convention. In the chapters on the party's local organisation I have made considerable use of information gathered from branch minute books. The sample of branches referred to was not derived randomly, but to the extent that it includes examples of branches in different electorates and in suburban, country-town and rural locations it is a fully representative group.

Research for the thesis was made possible by the grant of an

Australian National University scholarship, between March 1966 and May 1969. Needless to say a study of this kind could not have been completed without the help, interest and tolerance of a great many people. I am grateful in particular to the State Executive of the Liberal Party for sanctioning the project, and to the party members - far too numerous to name - who helped me in one way or another. I am especially indebted to the general secretary of the Victorian Division, Mr J.V. McConnell, and his staff at the Central Office, and to Miss Dorothy Jellett, formerly secretary of the Young Liberal Movement, Mr Bruce Skeggs, secretary of the Liberal Speakers Group, and Mr C.D. Kemp, director of the Institute of Public Affairs (Melbourne) and his staff, all of whom made records available to me and bore my presence for often long periods. My debt is greatest of all, for differing reasons, to my supervisors, Drs D.W. Rawson and D.A. Aitkin of the Department of Political Science, Australian National University, and to Senator Ivor Greenwood, Jennifer and Graham Willis (Melbourne), and my wife.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A.L.P.	Australian Labor Party
C.P.	Country Party
D.L.P.	Democratic Labor Party
I.P.A.	Institute of Public Affairs
U.A.O.	United Australia Organisation
U.A.P.	United Australia Party
Y.N.O.	Young Nationalists Organisation
SE	Minutes of State Executive
SC	Minutes of State Council
<u>S.M.H.</u>	<u>Sydney Morning Herald</u>

BACKGROUND

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Non-Labor party organisation in Australia in the 1920s and 1930s has been dismissed slightly by political historians. For example, one contemporary academic wrote: 'We need pay little attention to the U.A.P. political machine. There are leagues, conferences, platforms and so on; but the political leaders disregard these at will'.¹ No doubt largely as a result of the prevalence of this view, Mayer was able to remark as recently as 1954 that: 'nobody had thought it worth while to describe even the formal organisation of such bodies as the Nationalists and the U.A.P.'²

Descended from the organisationally discredited and politically despised United Australia Party, and also belonging

¹J.A. McCallum, 'The Economic Bases of Australian Politics', in Trends in Australian Politics, ed. W.G.K.Duncan, Sydney, 1935, p.67.

²Henry Mayer, 'Some Conceptions of the Australian Party System', in Historical Studies: Selected Articles II, eds. Margot Beever and F.B. Smith, Melbourne, 1967, p.221. Since then the gap has been only thinly papered over by accounts in the standard texts and by several articles and unpublished theses, viz, K.I. Turner, 'The National Party of New South Wales to the 1920 Elections', B.Ec. Hons. thesis, University of Sydney, n.d. [1957]; P.B. Westerway, 'Federal Liberal Party Organisation, 1910-1913', B.Ec.Hons. thesis, University of Sydney, 1956; B.D. Graham, 'The Place of Finance Committees in Non-Labor Politics, 1910-1930', in Readings in Australian Government, ed. Colin A. Hughes, St. Lucia, Queensland, 1968, pp.367-79; R.S. Parker, 'Group Interests and the Non-Labor Parties since 1930', in *ibid.*, pp.380-91; John R. Williams, 'The Organization of the Australian National Party', Australian Quarterly, Vol.41, No.2, June 1969, pp.41-51; Alexander Watson, 'Party Finance and Politics: The U.A.P. - A Case Study', paper delivered at 11th Annual Conference, Australasian Political Studies Association, Sydney, August 1969.

to a genre of middle-class parties of the right, whose extra-parliamentary structures have been somewhat disparaged,¹ the Liberal Party² for some time was also regarded as organisationally suspect. Thus, writing approximately five years after the party was formed, Louise Overacker, while observing that its organisation was no mere replica of that of the U.A.P., was still constrained to pass a rather qualified (though as it turned out prophetic) judgement on the significance of this:

The old negativism and defeatism have given way to what may develop into a middle-class dynamic... In moving away from the tight control of a small inner clique characteristic of the United Australia party and encouraging mass participation the Liberal party may... emerge as a vital, continuing force.³

During the 1950s, however, the typical view of Liberal Party organisation has become more unstintingly favourable to it. For example, Rawson has written:

¹Most notably by Maurice Duverger, Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State, trans. Barbara and Robert North, London, 1964 edition. The sense in which the Liberal Party is a middle-class party is illustrated below, pp.169-71 and pp.204-5. The general association between class and party in Australia is discussed and illustrated in A.F.Davies and S.Encel (eds.), Australian Society: A Sociological Introduction, Melbourne, 1965, pp.101-6, 109-13; Henry Mayer (ed.), Australian Politics: A Reader, Melbourne, 1966 edition, pp.52-55; Creighton Burns, Parties and People: A Survey Based on the La Trobe Electorate, Melbourne, 1961, pp.73-81; Robert R. Alford, Party and Society: The Anglo-American Democracies, London, 1964, *passim*. Also relevant is F.Lancaster Jones, 'A Social Ranking of Melbourne Suburbs', Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology, Vol.3, No.2, October 1967, pp.93-110.

²Unless otherwise indicated the term Liberal Party in this chapter refers to the Liberal Party of Australia, i.e. in effect it is a generic term applying to the party's federal presence, of which the various state Divisions are a part. Features attributed to the federal party are here assumed to apply also to the state Liberal parties.

³Louise Overacker, The Australian Party System, London, 1952, p.326.

By 1958 the Liberal Party, which by the standards of earlier non-Labor parties should have been in decrepit old age, was more formidable than ever before... The undercurrent of dissatisfaction with the whole structure of the party, which had been characteristic of the 1920s and 1930s, was almost entirely absent.¹

More recently, Jupp has judged the party's organisation to be 'superior to anything possessed by the non-Labor parties in the past',² and the political journalist Creighton Burns expressed the same opinion when he concluded that in 'policy and performance, as well as in organisation, there is a clear qualitative difference between the Liberal Party and... the U.A.P. and the Nationalists'.³

General appraisals of the Liberal Party have thus converged towards the party's own claim to be not only a new but a different party from its predecessors - albeit one performing much the same non-Labor role as they in the party system. There are several reasons for this movement of opinion. First, as will be explained more fully below, perceptions of the Liberal Party are likely to have been influenced by the recent raising of the theoretical status of such middle-class parties. Secondly, and more clearly, in scale, vigour and permanence, Liberal organisation is manifestly an improvement on the U.A.P.'s. Thirdly, there is the equally obvious fact that the state and federal Liberal parties have been

¹D.W. Rawson, Australia Votes: The 1958 Federal Election, Parkville, Victoria, 1961, p.22.

²James Jupp, Australian Party Politics, Parkville, Victoria, 1964, p.141.

³Dissent, Vol.4, No.1, Autumn 1964, p.5.

much more successful (and increasingly so if success is defined as winning government and staying in office) than their predecessors. Thus, in their first twelve years up to 1956, Liberal parliamentary parties were in government alone or in coalition with the Country parliamentary parties for approximately thirty years out of a combined state and federal possible total of eighty-four years; while in their second twelve years after 1956 their aggregate time in office was nearly twice as great.¹ Although there is no ground for asserting that organisation is even a major reason for the Liberal parties' increasing electoral success, it would be equally hard to argue that the two were unrelated. Individual election results apart, as the A.L.P. has discovered, organisation contributes to or detracts from a party's general image and thus may affect its electoral standing.²

A more normative element of the once common tendency to disparage the Liberal Party's organisation derives from comparing it not with the U.A.P., but with the Labor Party - from the perspective of their differing historical backgrounds and organisational

¹After the defeat of the state Labor government in the Tasmanian elections in 1969, all six state governments and the Commonwealth government were, for the first time, controlled by the Liberal Party or Liberal-Country coalitions.

²For reference to evidence based on surveys that organisation is a factor contributing to electors' images of the parties see Helen Nelson and Lex Watson, 'Party Organisation', in Henry Mayer (ed.), Australian Politics: A Second Reader, Melbourne, 1969, p.270.

doctrines. Thus, the A.L.P., originating as the political wing of the labour movement, is regarded as conforming more to the model of a 'genuine' mass party. According to this view, the Labor Party emphasises members and membership activity; its central organising principle is the collective sovereignty of its members; it is a disciplined party whose politicians, traditionally regarded as 'servants of the movement', are bound to policies laid down by the party's conferences. The Liberal Party by contrast is considered to display the characteristics of parties of the right in the British or European parliamentary tradition. Although it has emulated many of the organisational features of the A.L.P.,¹ the Liberal Party is not regarded as a 'genuine' mass party. Rather, it is said that, being dependent upon financial donations from business and other interests, the party has less need for and so is less concerned with building up a mass membership; its rank-and-file members are presumed to have only a limited role in party affairs, especially in the field of policy making where politicians, and in particular the party leader, are dominant. Conference resolutions therefore are commonly said to be of little significance, since they are 'only recommendations' which the parliamentary party

¹Overacker, p.269; D.W. Rawson, 'Another look at "Initiative and Resistance"', Politics, Vol.III, No.1, May 1968, p.46; below, p.15. For more general reference to the theme of 'contagious organisation' see Duverger, p.25; James Jupp, Political Parties, London, 1968, p.42.

may choose to ignore; the Liberal Party's policy-making procedures are thus judged to be less democratic than the A.L.P.'s, Overacker's description of the federal structure being accepted as generally true:

In actual practice the line of control runs from the parliamentary party to the executive and council rather than from the rank and file through the party hierarchy to the parliamentarian.¹

At the local level of organisation it is usual to emphasise that rank-and-file members are concerned only with 'campaign and election-day activities',² and that by and large branches are less active between elections than their Labor counterparts.³

Many of the unfavourable comparisons between features of the Liberal Party's organisation and those of Labor appeared to be born out by Maurice Duverger's systematic and influential work on comparative party structures. In his book Political Parties, published in 1951, Duverger maintained that the branch-based, mass-membership organisational forms adopted by 'conservative' or 'middle-class' parties did not function as effectively as the 'genuine' mass parties based on a predominantly working-class membership. Branch-based parties, argued Duverger, were discrepant with the political needs of middle-class people, who were 'not fond of collective

¹Overacker, p.270

²Ibid., p.246.

³Jupp, Australian Party Politics, p.41; D.W. Rawson and Susan M. Holtzinger, Politics in Eden-Monaro, London, 1958, p.51.

action', since their position in society did not warrant it.¹

However, subsequent writing on political parties, especially that published in the 1960s, has reflected an increasingly tolerant attitude towards the loosely-structured, less-disciplined, middle-class style of party organisation. This normative change stems largely from American rejoinders to Duverger's European-centred arguments, in particular his special pleading of the relevance in modern society of 'centralized and disciplined parties',² and his strictures against the 'out-of-date',³ American party system. In addition, in many Western parliamentary systems during the last two decades, conservative and centre parties have enjoyed considerable electoral success, while the growth of the mass-membership parties of the left has often been arrested. Leon Epstein, whose book Political Parties in Western Democracies⁴ is the main study of latter-day trends in party organisation, concludes that the 'trend appears to be away from, not toward' mass parties.⁴ The process of 'contagious organization', by which Duverger explained the tendency for middle-class parties to adopt the organisational forms of mass parties,⁵ does not operate only from left to right. Long-established

¹Political Parties, pp.25-7.

²Ibid., p.427.

³Ibid., p.5.

⁴Leon D. Epstein, Political Parties in Western Democracies, London, 1967, p.354.

⁵Political Parties, p.25.

mass parties of the political left have been shown to be modifying their traditional structures and organisational doctrines in order to widen their appeal to increasingly middle-class electorates.¹

Epstein in fact goes so far as to reverse Duverger's contention and discuss the apparent phenomenon of 'Contagion from the Right?'²

The countering of Duverger's deterministic theory of a sequential development of class-based parties by a less normative theory of political parties as 'responses to circumstances',³ has been conducive to a more benign attitude to the organisational styles of middle-class parties. They are not seen as the anachronistic structures that Duverger perceived them to be. Finally, and also relevant to the reappraisal of such parties, research in the field of political participation and detailed case studies of party structure have shown the middle-class activist to be a dynamic element in party organisation.⁴

¹ Epstein, Chapter XI. A good case study is Douglas A. Chalmers, The Social Democratic Party of Germany: From Working Class Movement to Modern Political Party, New Haven and London, 1964. (The same process could be shown to be occurring within the A.L.P. E.g., see Towards a National Party with a National Purpose. Text of Speeches to Three State Conferences of the Australian Labor Party by the Leader of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party Mr. E.G. Whitlam, Q.C., M.P., n.d. [1967]).

² Political Parties in Western Democracies, pp.257-60.

³ Ibid., p.351. See also Samuel J. Eldersveld, Political Parties: A Behavioral Analysis, Chicago, 1964, p.2; Frank J. Sorauf, Party Politics in America, Boston, 1968, pp.397, 403.

⁴ E.g., see Lester W. Milbrath, Political Participation, Chicago, 1965; Robert R. Alford and Harry M. Scoble, 'Sources of Local Political Involvement', American Political Science Review, Vol.LXII, No.4, December 1968, pp.1192-1206; Edward G. Janosik, Constituency
(cont.)

As a result of the distinct organisational traditions and social bases of the Australian Labor and Liberal parties, there are undoubtedly real contrasts between them. But how fairly has non-Labor's modern organisation been evaluated? Generalisations about the Liberal Party are at best derived from sketchy unsystematic evidence, often filled out by inferences drawn from the theoretical differences between Labor and non-Labor parties. A major aim of this thesis is to contribute to a more adequate empirical basis from which to generalise about the Australian Liberal parties.

Because of the extent to which non-Labor party organisation in Australia developed as a response to the organisational initiatives of the political left, it is highly likely that the Liberal Party is eclectic in its organisational forms, activities and attitudes. For example, while there are clearly elitist tendencies in the Liberal Party's organisation, especially in the role accorded its parliamentary leaders, it is notable that Overacker, in her early study of the party, observed that there were also 'members of the party who stress the importance of control by the membership, and in some quarters there is a disposition to develop the "movement" idea'.¹ How far and in what manner is this 'disposition' evident in Victoria? There

Labour Parties in Britain, London, 1968; J. Blondel, Voters, Parties and Leaders: The Social Fabric of British Politics, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1963; Frank Bealey, J. Blondel, W.P. McCann, Constituency Politics: A Study of Newcastle-under-Lyme, London, 1965.

¹The Australian Party System, p.270.

are many nuances and ambiguities in a party's organisation, which can best be revealed by detailed case studies of the kind attempted here.

As with other relatively centralised and disciplined parties in the British and European parliamentary traditions, it is possible to treat the Liberal Party as an integrated structure from the grass roots of its organisation to its parliamentary party. The federal structure of the Australian political system, however, creates some problems for a study of this kind, for many extra-parliamentary institutions function in relation to both state and federal politics. Since the scale of the study attempted here made it impractical to include more than one state Division, the party is studied as an integrated structure only at this level. While account is taken of the effect of federal politics on the party's organisation within the state, the contribution of the Victorian Division to the functioning of the federal extra-parliamentary bodies and their relation to the federal parliamentary party has of necessity been excluded. It is worth noting, however, that the development and operation of the Liberal Party's federal organisation would repay a separate study.

Partly compensating for the need to restrict the study to one state is the prominence of the Victorian Division in non-Labor politics. Party members in Victoria thrive on the sense that their state has a special role to play - that it is in fact the key

Liberal state. There is a little more to this view than mere vulgar parochialism. In several senses Victoria is the leading Liberal state. Firstly, although N.S.W. has more voters and parliamentary seats, in all except three of the nine federal elections between 1946 and 1966 Victoria returned more Liberal M.P.s to the House of Representatives than its larger neighbour.

TABLE 1.1

NUMBER OF SEATS WON BY LIBERAL CANDIDATES IN VICTORIA
AND N.S.W. IN GENERAL ELECTIONS 1946-66

	1946	1949	1951	1954	1955	1958	1961	1963	1966
N.S.W.	5(28)	16(47)	16(47)	15(47)	17(46)	16(46)	12(46)	17(46)	20(46)
VIC.	7(20)	17(33)	15(33)	15(33)	20(33)	18(33)	18(33)	18(33)	19(33)

Note: Numbers in brackets indicate total seats in each state.

Source: Hughes and Graham, A Handbook of Australian Government and Politics.

Secondly, Victoria has traditionally exercised a leadership role within the Liberal Party of Australia and, indeed, in non-Labor politics in general. This role is associated with Melbourne's function as the financial centre of Australia, as the original location of the national parliament and, for a longer period, of the head offices of Commonwealth governmental departments. Victoria, as a result, has contributed a disproportionate share of the Commonwealth's business, public service and political élites.¹ Moreover, it is the home state of the federal party's three parliamentary leaders and Prime Ministers, R.G. Menzies, 1945-66, H.E. Holt, 1966-8, and J.G. Gorton, 1968 - , while two of their non-Labor predecessors, Alfred Deakin and Stanley Bruce, were also Victorians.

Victorian Liberal Party members, therefore, with some justification believe that if Liberalism fails in Victoria it will fail also in Australia. History tends to bear them out.

¹'Politics at State Level - Victoria', Current Affairs Bulletin, Vol.39, No.7, February 1967, p.111.

CHAPTER 2

NON-LABOR ORGANISATION IN VICTORIA 1910-44¹

1910-31 : LIBERAL TO U.A.P.

The main features of non-Labor organisation in Victoria up to 1944 took shape after the federal elections in 1910, when the Labor Party demonstrated conclusively that it had emerged as a powerful electoral force in federal politics, and the Labor-non-Labor division had clearly become a major attribute of the party system.

In 1909 the anti-Labor groups in the federal parliament combined under the leadership of Alfred Deakin to form a Fusion Party. In the following year the federal elections were fought on predominantly two-party lines.² In the elections Labor triumphed over the Liberals - as the Fusionists had become known.³ The

¹The following articles and theses are of special importance in describing aspects of non-Labor organisation in this period: Graham, 'Finance Committees', in Readings in Australian Government, ed. Hughes; Parker, 'Group Interests and the Non-Labor Parties', in ibid.; P.B. Westerway, Federal Liberal Party Organisation, 1910-1913; Philip R. Hart, J.A. Lyons: A Political Biography, Ph.D. thesis, A.N.U., 1967.

²Geoffrey Sawyer, Australian Federal Politics and Law 1901-1929, Melbourne, 1956, p.88.

³The number of seats won by endorsed Labor candidates throughout the Commonwealth increased from twenty-six in 1906 to forty-three in 1910, while the percentage of the vote won by Labor rose from thirty-seven to fifty. In Victoria, Labor's representation increased from four to eleven, and its vote from 30 per cent to 48 per cent.

outcome was widely attributed in the non-Labor press and, indeed, by Deakin himself, to Labor's superior organisation.¹ Alarmed at the swing to Labor, many non-Labor activists looked to an expansion of their own organisation. Like the chairman of a large non-Labor meeting held after the elections at the country town of Warracknabeal, they were ready to admit that Labor 'had deservedly achieved their success through organisation', and agreed with him that the only way to counter Labor's challenge was 'by the organisation of those who were outside that party'.²

In this mood non-Labor moved away from the ad hoc methods of electoral organisation associated with the pre-Fusion period of party politics and espoused the constitutional structure, many of the organising techniques, and some of the rhetoric of a mass party. It did not, however, accept all the doctrines of such a party. Most notably, for example, it rejected out of hand the idea that its extra-parliamentary institutions should exercise any formal control over its parliamentary members. Thus developed after 1910 non-Labor's characteristic synthesis of democratic organisational forms and elitist doctrines.

Labor's decisive victory in the 1910 elections and its proposed policies stirred its opponents into a flurry of organising

¹Argus, 14 July, 2 September 1910. See also, Alfred Deakin, 'A New Era in Politics', in Federated Australia. Selections From Letters to the Morning Post 1900-1910, ed. J.A. La Nauze, Carlton, Victoria, 1968, pp.284-8.

²Argus, 2 September 1910.

activity, which was further stimulated by their campaign for a 'no' vote in the Commonwealth powers referenda in April 1911,¹ and the need to contest state elections later in the same year. The immediate effect on non-Labor organisation was a sharp increase in the membership of the two existing electoral bodies - the Australian Women's National League (A.W.N.L.) and the Commonwealth Liberal Party (C.L.P.) - and the formation of a third organisation, the People's Party (P.P.). The A.W.N.L. had been founded as early as 1904 with the object of promoting the cause of women's suffrage in Victoria, and other feminist policies. By 1910 it was already a vigorous organisation claiming 25,000 members in 252 branches.² But, by September 1913, its membership was said to have doubled to 50,000 in 492 branches.³ The C.L.P., which had been created by Deakin in 1908 to organise support for Liberal candidates, also expanded rapidly in Melbourne and in the larger centres of Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong. In September 1911 it claimed about 15,000 members in 331 branches, 161 of which were women's branches.⁴

Immediately after the 1910 elections a new organisation, the People's Party, took root in the country areas, mainly as a result of farmer reaction to Labor's land tax policy and the extension to rural employees of the Commonwealth Conciliation and

¹For the terms of the referenda, see L.F. Crisp, Australian National Government, Croydon, Victoria, 1965, p.45.

²Jupp, Australian Party Politics, p.123.

³Argus, 30 September 1913.

⁴Liberal, Vol. 1, No.3, September 1911, p.63.

Arbitration Act. The new organisation grew rapidly, helped by the fact that its branches often sprang directly from the existing Farmers' Leagues,¹ by the assistance it received from the country branches of the A.W.N.L.,² and by the efforts of at least two full-time organisers.³ Consequently, its membership of 16,000 in 1911⁴ rose to 30,000 in 388 branches a year later.⁵

The three organisations co-ordinated their campaign against the Commonwealth powers referenda through a 'Council of Leagues', to which each sent three delegates.⁶ The success of their combined campaign suggested that a pooling of their resources would strengthen the non-Labor cause. Immediately after the referenda, negotiations were begun with the object of bringing about a merger of the three organisations. As the Argus, a Melbourne daily committed to the non-Labor cause, had pointed out on an earlier occasion:

Any differences of opinion [Liberals] may have amongst themselves are trifling in comparison with the gulf which separates them from the political morals and methods of the common enemy... The first thing to do is to secure a merger of existing organisations...⁷

¹E.g., Argus, 10 October, 2 November, 17 December 1910.

²La Nauze describes the membership of the People's Party as 'apparently largely composed of the husbands and brothers of members of the A.W.N.L.' (Alfred Deakin. A Biography, Vol.2, Carlton, Victoria, 1965, p.617).

³Argus, 10 December 1910.

⁴Ibid., 8 September 1911.

⁵Ibid., 5 September 1912.

⁶Liberal, Vol.1, No.2, August 1911, p.40.

⁷Argus, 2 September 1910.

The negotiations were strongly supported by the members of the Constitutional Union, the influential finance committee which, after 1910, had assumed responsibility for raising and disbursing party funds. But visions of 'one large party for all men and women Liberals'¹ were quickly dispelled by the A.W.N.L.'s resistance to the idea. Despite this, discussions between the Commonwealth Liberal Party and the People's Party went ahead. Terms of amalgamation were agreed on and in anticipation of the event the C.L.P. changed its name to the People's Liberal Party (P.L.P.) and adopted a modified platform and constitution.² But at the last minute the P.P. retreated. One reason given for this was that the acceptance of any organisation with women's branches throughout the state might injure the A.W.N.L.³ Further unity moves in 1913 on the basis of a single Victorian Liberal Union with separate men's and women's leagues collapsed when the A.W.N.L. again stood aloof.⁴ A duplication of electoral organisations was, in fact, to remain a characteristic of anti-Labor party structure until 1945 (Figure 2.1).

Twice during the period from 1910 to 1931, the structure of the non-parliamentary organisation was adjusted to changes in the federal anti-Labor parliamentary party. This occurred in 1917 and again in 1931.

¹Liberal, Vol.1, No.2, August 1911, p.40.

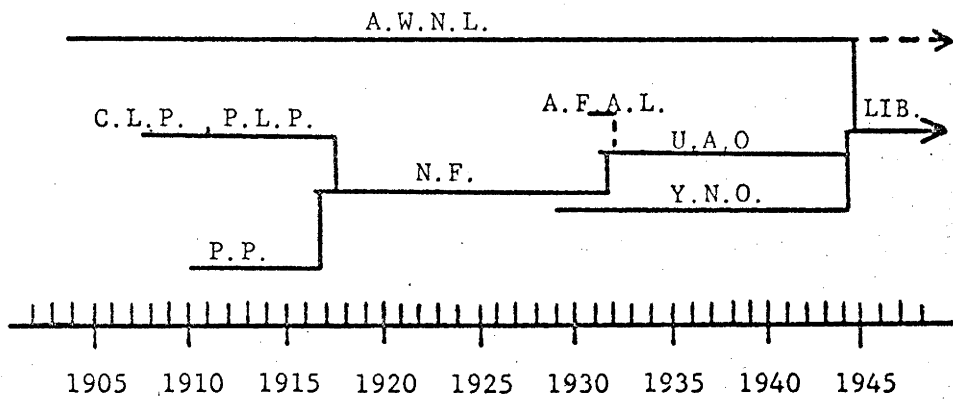
²Argus, 8 September 1911.

³Ibid. . . .

⁴Ibid., 11 November 1913.

FIGURE 2.1

NON-LABOR ELECTORAL ORGANISATIONS 1910-45.



Key

- A.W.N.L. - Australian Women's National League
- C.L.P. - Commonwealth Liberal Party
- P.L.P. - People's Liberal Party
- P.P. - People's Party
- N.F. - National Federation
- A.F.A.L. - All For Australia League
- U.A.O. - United Australia Organisation
- Y.N.O. - Young Nationalist Organisation

In January 1917, the Prime Minister, W.M. Hughes, having broken with the Labor Party when it split over the conscription issue, launched a new organisation - the National Federation.¹ By March there were about ninety branches of the Federation throughout Victoria.² Meanwhile, in the Commonwealth parliament, the Labor conscriptionists combined with the Liberals to form the parliamentary Nationalist Party under Hughes' leadership. During the elections in May the existing 'Liberal' electoral organisations, as well as the National Federation's own branches, supported the Nationalist candidates. The elections over and won after this display of organisational cohesion, the inevitable unity negotiations were opened among representatives of the National Federation, the National Union (formerly the Constitutional Union), the P.L.P. and the P.P. (This time the women were not invited.)³ The amalgamation of the P.P. and the National Federation was completed in October.⁴ The P.L.P. still hesitated, but after further negotiations and a referendum among its branches it too merged with the National Federation.⁵ Shortly after this the Federation announced its vital statistics, claiming 352 branches throughout the state (275 of which were outside the metropolitan area) and 50,000 - 60,000 members.⁶

¹Ibid., 9, 11 January 1917.

²Ibid., 29 March 1917.

³Ibid., 27 September 1917.

⁴Ibid., 6 October 1917.

⁵Ibid., 18 July 1918.

⁶Ibid., 5 October 1918.

These are impressive figures, larger by far in relation to the size of the electorate than present party memberships. In fact, however, non-Labor's entry into the age of mass parties was not as dramatic as such raw statistics suggest. Evidence of a ubiquitous problem for mass political parties is provided by a contemporary observer who asked:

How is it that the efforts of Liberal organisers throughout Australia so often fade into nothingness almost as soon as their backs are turned on the district where they have formed branches?

And he supplied his own commonsense answer: politics were 'too "dry" and uninteresting to the average person to cause sustained interest and action'.¹ The nominal membership of a voluntary political organisation is quickly eroded by the transitory interest, even total indifference, which most people have towards politics. And this is especially the case in non-Labor parties, enrolment in which usually involves their members in no special obligations. The Nationalist Party, however, not only suffered from a normal shrinkage of membership, in the country areas it was further weakened by the emergence of the Country Party after 1917.²

In the early twenties the decline of non-Labor's electorate organisation began to arouse concern among its leaders.³ At the

¹ Liberal, Vol.1, No.1, July 1911, p.11.

² The A.W.N.L. was also greatly weakened in country areas by the formation of the Country Party, and presumably so too was the rural-based People's Party. This may well help to explain the P.P.'s readiness to merge with the National Federation in October 1917, whereas it had resisted amalgamation with the C.L.P. in 1911.

³ Argus, 6, 9 September 1924.

same time the Country Party's increasing state parliamentary representation undermined the Nationalists' dominance of the Legislative Assembly,¹ resulting in the formation of a Country-Nationalist coalition ministry after 1923, and a short-lived Labor government between July and November 1924. Alarmed at the trend, the central organs of the Federation took steps to revive its electoral organisation, helped by the fact that the National Union was sufficiently affluent at the time to devote funds to a special organising effort.² In December 1924, G.S. MacLean left his position as secretary to the Premier's Department to become the organising secretary of the National Federation,³ and soon after the Federation secured new premises at 20 Queen St., Melbourne.⁴ Maj.-Gen. J.K. Forsyth, who had acted as the general secretary before MacLean took office, was transferred to a position entitled 'field superintendent'.⁵ By March 1925, field organisers were reported at work forming new branches and reviving old ones in eight federal electorates.⁶ MacLean toured the main centres of

¹Between January 1909 and September 1923, Liberal or Nationalist governments had been continuously in office except for a thirteen-day Labor ministry in December 1913.

²Thus B.D. Graham refers to a highly successful canvass by the National Union among Melbourne firms in 1925 when there was 'deep concern at the influence of bolsheviks within the trade unions' ('Finance Committees', in Hughes, p.370).

³Argus, 26 December 1924.

⁴Ibid., 19 March 1925.

⁵Ibid., 15 January 1925.

⁶Ibid., 19 March 1925.

Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong, and journeyed into the Western District,¹ where he held 'conferences with leading residents' and drew up 'programmes of activity for the next three months'. The Federation's annual conference in September reported the formation of sixty-one new branches.² Although the organising campaign lost its intensity after 1925 some activity continued during the next few years;³ but there is evidence that towards the end of the 1920s participation in local party activities declined to a minimal level.⁴

Several political reverses in 1929 made supporters of the Nationalists painfully aware of the state of their party's electoral organisation. In September, the Bruce-Page (Nationalist-C.P.) coalition was defeated in the federal parliament. The elections which followed in October resulted in a landslide to Labor, which took office for the first time since 1916.⁵ Concern at the swing to Labor led to the formation of a 'ginger' group to support the campaigns of Nationalist candidates in the state elections⁶ which were to be held only seven weeks after the disastrous federal poll.

¹Ibid., 12 February, 27 March 1925.

²Ibid., 23 September 1925.

³Ibid., 30 January, 11 February, 23 February 1926; 8 August 1927; 18 September 1928.

⁴Ibid., 21 September 1927; 13 July 1928; Kew Advertiser, 17 March 1927.

⁵Labor's overall representation rose from thirty-one to forty-six. In Victoria, Labor gained five seats, four of which were won from the Nationalists.

⁶Argus, 15 November 1929.

The group remained in existence after the elections and crystallised into the Young Nationalist Organisation (Y.N.O.). The November state elections, although not as damaging for the Nationalists as the federal contest had been, left the Assembly divided and, after moving a successful no-confidence motion, Labor took office.

With Labor governments at both state and federal levels, the National Federation belatedly resolved to again revive its grass-roots organisation. It welcomed the emergence of the Y.N.O. and granted it representation on the Federation's Executive.¹ Shortly after, a Council was formed comprising representatives from every component of the Nationalist Party - the federal and state parliamentary parties, the National Union, the A.W.N.L. and National Federation.² Its first action was to agree to launch an intensive organising campaign and to hold a series of political rallies.³

Within a year, however, depression politics burst the framework of existing parties and their organisations throughout Australia.

In Sawyer's words, 'the anxieties of depression' caused a

proliferation of organisations of citizens... some as rivals to the existing political parties, some as allies,

¹Ibid., 17 December 1929.

²Ibid., 13 February 1930. The Y.N.O. was not formally constituted until March 1930, though, as noted above, it was already represented on the Executive of the Federation.

³Ibid.

and some for the purpose of realizing the old dream
of so many honest citizens - politics without parties.¹

For a time, the problems of the National Federation were forgotten while the party's resources were channelled into a new anti-Labor organisation - the All For Australia League (A.F.A.L.). Launched at the Melbourne Town Hall in February 1931, the A.F.A.L. claimed to have 80,000 members in 320 branches by May.² Its leading personnel were closely associated with the National Union, which supplied it with finance³ and encouraged local activists in the National Federation to sponsor meetings to establish branches of the League.⁴ The Nationalists, according to one source, 'planned to use the A.F.A. to attract voters from Labour... and intended ultimately to amalgamate it into the Nationalist organization'.⁵

Meanwhile, as had happened in 1917, events within federal parliament led to changes in non-Labor's extra-parliamentary organisation. In May 1931, six former Labor M.P.s joined with the Nationalists to form the United Australia Party. Adjusting to this, a non-parliamentary United Australia movement (soon referred to as

¹Geoffrey Sawyer, Australian Federal Politics and Law 1929-1949, Melbourne, 1963, p.39.

²Kew Advertiser, 28 May 1931.

³Hart, J.A. Lyons, pp.105-7.

⁴E.g., reports of annual meeting of Kew branch of National Federation (Kew Advertiser, 22 September 1927), and of formation of Kew branch of A.F.A.L. (*ibid.*, 16, 30 April 1931).

⁵Hart, p.106.

the United Australia Organisation) was created and institutionalised in a council consisting of representatives from the National Federation, A.F.A.L., A.W.N.L. and the Young Nationalists. The purpose of the council was to organise and co-ordinate the campaign activities of United Australia candidates.¹ Finance was supplied by the National Union. The U.A. movement's immediate objective was secured in the federal elections in December, when the U.A.P. won a landslide victory over Labor and took office under the leadership of the former Labor minister, J.A. Lyons.

The next step was to tidy up the party's extra-parliamentary structure. There had been a considerable overlapping of structures during the federal campaign. As the president of the A.F.A.L., E. Turnbull, explained (somewhat obscurely):

...for the election campaign [A.F.A.L.] members automatically became members of the United Australia Organisation. With the election past, and realising that the league's task in that direction had been completed, the [A.F.A.L.] had withdrawn from active association with the Nationalists in the United Australia Organisation. It followed that its individual members automatically ceased to be members of the United Australia Organisation.²

The election over, the A.F.A.L. officially suspended its activities.³

This prepared the way for an announcement by R.G. Menzies, in his capacity as president of the National Federation, that the Federation's Executive and State Council had agreed to merge their

¹ Argus, 6 May 1931. In September the Nationalist state parliamentary party also adopted the name U.A.P.

² Ibid., 24 February 1932.

³ Ibid., 21 January 1932.

organisation into that of the United Australia Organisation (U.A.O.). All existing branches of the Federation thus became branches of the U.A.O., strengthened it was hoped by the presence of many new members who had rallied to the support of the U.A.P., having had no previous association with the Federation.¹

The transition from National Federation to U.A.O. involved few changes. G.S. MacLean became the Organisation's general secretary, operating, however, not from the Federation's former premises at 20 Queen St., but from the offices of the National Union at 395 Collins Street;² and with only very minor amendments the U.A.O. adopted the existing constitution and procedures of the National Federation. The A.W.N.L. continued its separate existence as before; and the Young Nationalists, although retaining for the time being their representation on the Executive of the U.A.O., announced that their organisation would also maintain its separate identity. To help co-ordinate the activities of the three bodies a Unity Council, comprising representatives from each of them as well as from the parliamentary parties, was established. However, it appears to have soon fallen into disuse.

Contrary to non-Labor's hopes, the U.A.O. derived no lasting benefit from the upsurge of interest in politics in 1930-1. The rush of middle-class people to attend the meetings of the

¹Ibid., 23 February 1932.

²Hart, p.161.

A.F.A.L. was a panic response induced by the depression and a heightened sense of class conflict.¹ By mid-1932, with the U.A.P. in office at federal and state levels,² the political crisis was over in Victoria. Political behaviour quickly returned to normal; the scores of thousands who had 'joined' the A.F.A.L. vanished back into the electorate, and the U.A.O. made no attempt to mobilise them into its branches. The U.A.O., like its immediate predecessor, was to be a 'cadre' organisation, lacking a substantial mass membership, dependent on donations of finance from business interests and primary producers, and relying on small groups of loyal activists to carry out electoral tasks and generally keep the organisation 'alive' - if only for the duration of election campaigns.

1931-44: THE ORGANISATION OF THE U.A.P.

Strictly speaking, in Victoria the title U.A.P. referred only to the state and federal parliamentary parties. As we have seen, the parliamentarians were supported by three separate electoral organisations - the United Australia Organisation, the Young Nationalist Organisation and the A.W.N.L. Behind the U.A.P. was the National Union, the personnel of which were responsible for the party's finances. In fact, however, they had also been instrumental in the creation of the federal U.A.P. in 1931.³

¹L.F. Crisp, Ben Chifley, Croydon, Victoria, 1963 edition, p.74.

²As the result of elections in December 1931 and May 1932, respectively.

³E.g., see Hart, Ch.2.

(a) The United Australia Organisation¹

Figure 2.2 summarises the formal organisational structure of the U.A.O.² Membership of the U.A.O. was open to all persons over the age of eighteen years for the nominal sum of one shilling. Branches, defined as units of not less than ten members, formed the base of a hierarchic, elective structure. Immediately above the branches, provision was made for an electorate level of organisation consisting either of federal electorate councils, made up of delegates from the branches in the various electorates, or of district committees based on the branches in state electorates. More commonly, especially in country areas, the main (often the only) branch in an electorate was given the official status of 'capital branch' and assumed a supervisory role over the electorate's organisation. Such branches were often located in the larger country centres and are on record in Geelong, Bendigo and Ballarat.³ Of more significance at the electorate level of organisation were the candidate selection conventions and the election campaign committees. Both of these were joint structures involving activists from the three separate non-parliamentary organisations.

At the central level of organisation were the Conference, State Council and Central Executive. The Conference, consisting

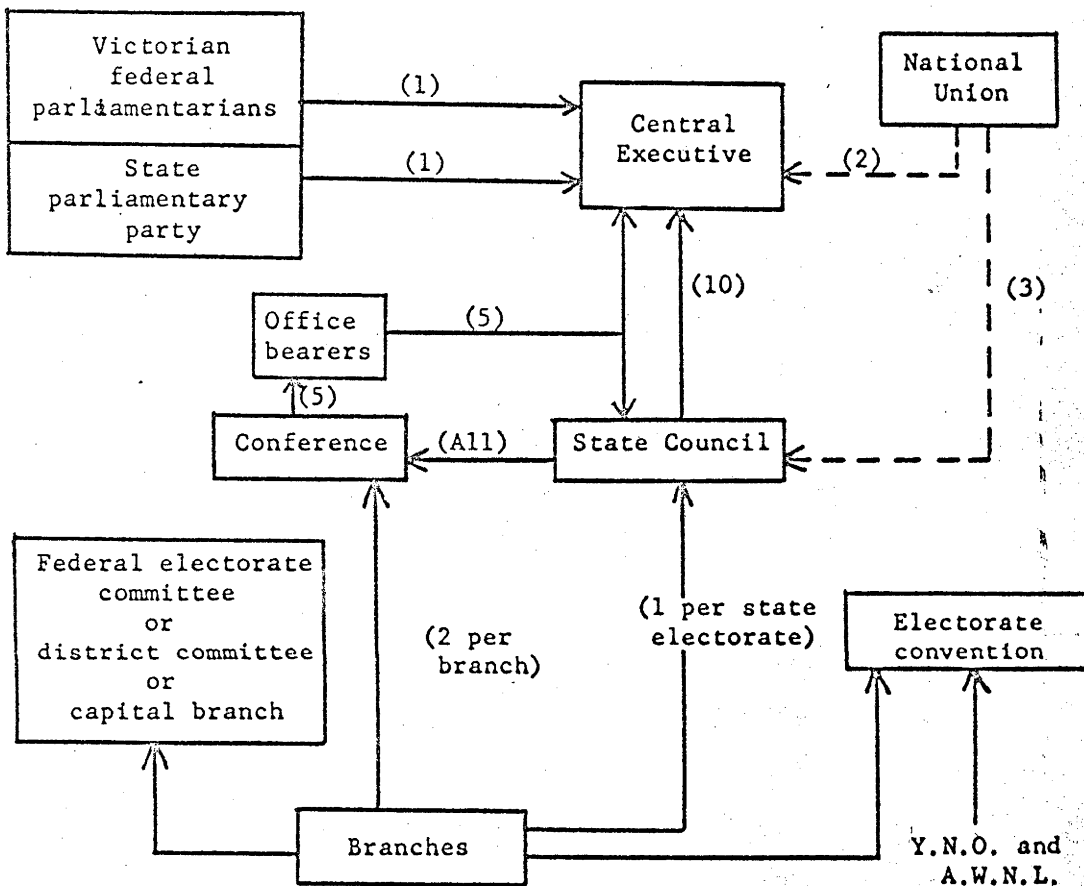
¹References in this section to the constitution of the U.A.O. are from Constitution and Platform of United Australia Organisation, adopted by the Annual Conference, 20 September 1932.

²Cf. that of the Liberal Party. See below, p.92.

³Argus, 23 February 1926.

FIGURE 2.2

FORMAL STRUCTURE OF THE U.A.O.



Notes: (1) Figures in brackets indicate the number of representatives appointed from one institution to another.

(2) Dotted lines indicate probable representation of National Union on central institutions of U.A.O.

of two representatives from each branch and all members of the State Council, met annually to elect the officers of the U.A.O. and to discuss policy resolutions. The Council comprised one representative from each state electorate. If necessary the representative was to be elected by ballot conducted among the branches in the electorate. In addition to the electorate representatives, the Council was attended by the officers of the Organisation, and up to three representatives of approved affiliated bodies. The functions of the Council were defined broadly as the 'management of the Organisation'. In addition to general organisational matters, this included approving additions to the party platforms and alterations to the rules of the Organisation, and dealing with requests for affiliation. In practice the Council delegated its general powers to the Central Executive.

The Executive consisted of the elected office-bearers of the Organisation, ten other members elected by and from the State Council, and one representative of the state and federal parliamentary parties respectively; in addition, the constitution provided for two representatives from 'the affiliated organisation'.¹ Its

¹ Constitution, 1932, Clause 23. It is not clear what organisation this phrase (which occurred also in the constitution of the National Federation) referred to, but since it was neither the A.W.N.L. nor the Y.N.O., it was very likely an oblique reference to the National Union. According to Hart, both the Union's chairman, Sir Robert Knox, and its secretary, E.H. Willis, held 'official positions' in the U.A.O. (J.A. Lyons, p.163). These were not, however, elective positions. Nonetheless their involvement with the U.A.O. was close - e.g. when a 'conference of representatives

powers, deriving from those of the Council, were defined as the management of 'all the affairs of the Organisation' with the exception of changes in the constitution and the platforms.¹ On the latter questions, however, the Executive was entitled to make recommendations to the State Council,² which, it may be assumed, would generally adopt them. In addition, the Executive controlled the endorsement of parliamentary candidates, and the summoning and composition of candidate selection conventions.³

Candidates for parliament were selected by conventions consisting either of all financial adult members in an electorate or, at the discretion of the Executive, a specified number of representatives from each branch. As the conventions included activists from the A.W.N.L. and Young Nationalists, as well as the U.A.O., we can assume that the local organisations of these bodies came to some agreement as to the balance of representation at the convention.

(b) The Young Nationalist Organisation

As was noted earlier, the Y.N.O. originated in 1929 when

of United Australia party organisations' was held in N.S.W., in 1934, the Victorian representatives were Knox and Willis (S.M.H., 2 June 1934). It seems most probable therefore that the constitutions of both the National Federation and the U.A.O. should include some formal provision to ensure the representation of the National Union on their Central Executives.

¹Constitution, 1932, Clause 26.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., Clauses 33, 35, 38, 39.

T.S. Nettlefold, R.G. Menzies and W.S. Kent Hughes organised a group of younger activists to assist Nationalist candidates in the October federal elections.¹ Nettlefold at this time was a prominent and politically active Melbourne businessman;² while Menzies,³ the endorsed candidate for the state seat of Nunawading, and Kent Hughes,⁴ M.L.A. for Kew since 1927, were beginning their long political careers. In March 1930, the Y.N.O. was formally constituted at a general meeting of its members. Its object was then defined as:

The formation within the Nationalist organisation of an inner and active body of members who will be qualified to undertake active political campaigning.⁵

¹The seeds of the Y.N.O., however, can be seen in 1927 when Kent Hughes opposed the endorsed Nationalist candidate, E.R.T.Reynolds, in the state electorate of Kew. Kent Hughes' campaign secretary on that occasion was A.H. Clerke, who became a foundation member of the Y.N.O. and its president in 1938-9. Clerke and Kent Hughes, it was reported, had gathered together 'a body of nearly twenty younger men who are keenly and actively interested in the political issues of today' (Kew Advertiser, 6 January 1927). Kent Hughes may be justly regarded as the real originator of the Young Nationalists.

²Mayor of Melbourne 1942-5; knighted 1945; Executive of National Federation, 1931; first president of Young Nationalists, 1930-31; with others, helped to engineer J.A. Lyons' switch from the A.L.P. to leadership of the U.A.P. (Hart, pp.87-8).

³Menzies' political career may be summarised thus: M.L.C. East Yarra (Vic.) 1928-9; M.L.A. Nunawading (Vic.) 1929-34; M.H.R. Kooyong (Vic.) 1934-66; state Attorney-General and Deputy-Premier, Victoria, 1932-4; federal Attorney-General 1934-9; Treasurer 1939-40; Prime Minister 1939-41, 1949-66; knighted 1963.

⁴Kent Hughes' political career, like that of Menzies, spanned both state and federal spheres of politics, thus: M.L.A. Kew (Vic.) 1927-49; held state portfolios 1934-5, 1947-9; Deputy-Premier, Victoria, 1948-9; A.I.F. 1940-45; p.o.w. 1943-5; M.H.R. Chisholm (Vic.) 1949- ; Minister of Interior and Works, 1951-6; knighted 1957.

⁴Argus, 3 March 1930.

The Y.N.O. quickly achieved prominence in the affairs of the party and played a major part in the events culminating in the formation of the Liberal Party.

Its organisational structure reflected its emphasis on activism. Initially, membership was limited to 449 (440 ordinary members and nine Executive members) organised into two metropolitan and two country 'hundreds', which were in turn to be subdivided into groups of ten under leaders selected by the Executive.¹ Within months of the formation of the Y.N.O., however, the restriction on membership was raised to 800 to enable, if possible, the formation of at least one group in every state electorate.² According to the rules of the Y.N.O., membership was less open than for the U.A.O. Joining the Young Nationalists involved nomination by a group leader and one other member, election by the Executive, the payment of an annual fee of five shillings (raised to seven shillings and sixpence by 1933),³ and an undertaking to join the U.A.O. when called upon to do so by the Executive of the Y.N.O.

The Young Nationalists shared the offices of the U.A.O.,

¹Young Nationalist Organisation, Constitution, as adopted at General Meeting, 28 February 1930, Clauses 3, 9. The first 'hundred' leaders were: Metropolitan, A.H. Clerke, J.A.Spicer; Country, T.K. Maltby, M.L.A. (Barwon), T.C. Manifold, M.L.A. (Hampden).

²Argus, 16 October 1930. There were sixty-five state electorates at the time. There is no evidence that the objective of a 'group' in each of them was ever achieved.

³Cf. the U.A.O. fee of one shilling.

but by 1933 had their own permanent, paid organising secretary, Major D. Radclyffe, whose salary was doubtless subsidised by the National Union.

The Y.N.O. was not intended to be a mass organisation; it was an activist structure in which nominal members were not welcome. Thus, in 1936, the Executive requested the new group leaders for the year to indicate to the organising secretary the names of any members who desired to resign, 'so that their names could be eliminated'.¹ Inevitably a proportion of the members became inactive, and some groups withered and had to be revived;² but, throughout the period, the Y.N.O. was a continuously active body -- in marked contrast to the U.A.O.³ Its activities emphasised electioneering, political education and the development of political skills through public speaking, debating, political discussions and research.⁴ Of the three organisations supporting the U.A.P., the Y.N.O. was by far the most concerned with influencing the formulation of party policy. Reflecting the overall high degree of interest in policy issues and the capabilities of the members recruited into

¹Minutes of Hawthorn group of Y.N.O., 9 March 1936.

²E.g. the Kew group (ibid., 9 March, 11 May 1936).

³Active groups appear to have ranged in size from eight to twenty members and to have functioned rather like one of the more active branches of the present Liberal Party. The Hawthorn group, for example, held thirty-six meetings in six years between 1931 and 1937, with an average attendance of ten, and a range of from three to sixteen (Minutes of Hawthorn group).

⁴It claimed a library of over 1000 volumes, published a monthly journal - The Australian Statesman, and posted the Australian Quarterly to all members (Young Nationalist Organisation. What it Stands For, Melbourne, n.d. [c.1936/]).

the Y.N.O., policy discussion was a regular feature of group meetings.¹ Sub-committees of the Executive were formed to examine specific areas of policy and report back to the Executive.

Unlike the U.A.O., the Young Nationalists attracted a favourable press.² Their platform and the deliberations of their annual conferences were always prominently reported. In this respect, the Y.N.O. saw itself, as did others (including the Argus - a tireless advocate of organisational reform), as the proponent of liberal, progressive policies within a party tending towards conservatism and, as a consequence, declining electorally during the later 1930s.

The 'Young Nats.', as they were popularly known, developed a strong sense of their own role in Victorian non-Labor politics, a role which increasingly differentiated the Y.N.O. from the U.A.O. The trend was detectable in the proposals for a major revision of the constitution of the Y.N.O. in 1936. In the revised version of the constitution the objects of the Organisation were expanded and its relationship with the U.A.O. redefined. Originally describing themselves as 'an inner and active body within' the U.A.O.,³ the Young Nationalists now adopted a more distant and equal relationship: their role was stated simply as that of co-operation with the U.A.O., the A.W.N.L. 'and allied

¹Minutes of Hawthorn group, 1931-7.

²See below, p.54.

³Constitution, 1930, Clause 2 (emphasis added).

organisations'.¹ Whereas the original objects referred to the task of the Young Nationalists as that of 'active political campaigning', the Y.N.O. after 1936 dedicated itself as well to encouraging and organising 'the study of political, economic and social problems', formulating statements of policy, and pressing for their inclusion in the platform of the U.A.O. and for their implementation by parliament.² At the same time the platform of the Y.N.O. abandoned all reference to that of the U.A.O. Thus, the original version stated that:

the General Platform shall be that of the United Australia Organisation. Members in General Meetings may select from such platform planks to constitute the fighting platform³ of the Young Nationalist Organisation for the time being.

But the new prescription simply said:

The platform of the organisation shall be that adopted from time to time by a two-thirds majority of members present in general meeting.⁴

¹Young Nationalist Organisation, Proposed Amended Constitution, n.d. [1936], Clause 2 (a).

²Proposed Amended Constitution, Clause 2(b), (c), (d). The clause read in full:

- (b) to encourage and organise the study of political economic and social problems.
- (c) To formulate statements of policy; to urge the adoption thereof as planks in the platform of the U.A.O. and allied organisations, and to secure the carrying into effect thereof by either the Federal or State Legislature as the case may be.
- (d) To undertake active political organisation and campaigning.

³Constitution, 1930, Clause 11.

⁴Proposed Amended Constitution, Clause 3.

The Young Nats. had 'come of age'. Beginning in 1929 as a group whose activities were intended to supplement the electoral organisation of the National Federation, and later the U.A.O., by 1936 the Y.N.O. had developed into something more like a party within a party. It administered its own organisation, determined its own (anti-Labor) platform, and acted as a major channel of recruitment into parliament. Many state and federal parliamentarians maintained a close association with the Y.N.O. until the formation of the Liberal Party. The Organisation attracted active and often politically ambitious individuals from the 'pool' of potential anti-Labor activists. They were men who might otherwise have contributed their resources to and enlivened the U.A.O. To this extent, the existence of the Y.N.O. contributed to the former body's organisational feebleness. The relationship between the two organisations may in fact be regarded as an intra-party example of the kind of competition for (scarce) political resources discussed by Sorauf, with reference to the American political system, thus:

Political organizations compete first of all for political resources: for money, for skills and expertise, for the efforts of men and women committed to a political goal. All of these "inputs" are essential for the "fueling" of organizational activity, but none of them is in abundant supply... What resources one organization or type of organization takes may very well deplete the resources of another and thus curtail its capacity for action.¹

¹Frank J. Sorauf, Party Politics in America, Boston, 1968, p.5.

(c) The A.W.N.L.

The A.W.N.L. is the only one of the electoral organisations discussed in this chapter to have maintained a continuous existence from the beginning of the period to the founding of the Liberal Party. Combining political and non-political activities, the branches of the League were commonly acknowledged to be more active than those of the U.A.O. Harsh judgements of the A.W.N.L. are rarely to be found, and its campaign activities especially were lauded in the non-Labor press. A passage from a leader of the Argus expresses the conventional, and just, non-Labor view of the A.W.N.L.:

The League is sincere, conscientious, indefatigable in its organisation and particularly in the prosecution of election campaigns. Every elector has observed the remarkable activity of members of the League on election days and the equally remarkable indifference of male adherents of the U.A.P.¹

Apart from its campaign activities the League's role in non-Labor organisation during the period from 1910 to 1944 is difficult to establish clearly and would repay a separate study. As ambitious party activists were well aware, however, gaining the support of the A.W.N.L. was often a necessary step to winning pre-selection, a process in which the League was accorded a full share by means of joint conventions of members of each of the organisations in the electorates concerned.

¹ Argus, 19 May 1938. See also F.W. Eggleston, Reflections of an Australian Liberal, Melbourne, 1953, p.133.

Throughout the period of the U.A.P., the League generally maintained a closer and more harmonious relationship with the Young Nationalists than with the U.A.O. The A.W.N.L. frequently called on Young Nationalists as well as parliamentarians to provide speakers for their branch meetings. Though it was more deferential than the Young Nats., the League still showed its scorn for the U.A.O.'s organisational lassitude; but being politically more cautious than the Y.N.O., the A.W.N.L., was to play a less prominent role than the Young Nationalists in the emergence of the Liberal Party.

(d) The National Union¹

The existence of, and the role played by, non-Labor's extra-constitutional finance committee- the National Union - is perhaps the most characteristic feature of non-Labor organisation in the period up to 1944. Moreover, because of its direct role in the formation of the U.A.P. in 1931,² the influence of the Union within the party was greatest in the latter years of the period, when its key personnel were Sir Robert Knox,³ who became chairman of the Union in 1931, and Ernest Willis, O.B.E., its

¹The following description leans heavily on Hart, pp.161-7.

²Ibid., p.163.

³Knox was variously president of the Australian Chambers of Commerce, executive member of the Federal Council of the Employers' Federation of Australia, chairman of the Australian National Committee of the International Chamber of Commerce, and 'a leading figure in the insurance world' (ibid., p.162).

secretary from 1918 to 1944.

The National Union was a small committee of up to six prominent businessmen and graziers who undertook responsibility for the collection of the money necessary for contesting elections and maintaining a party organisation. It was the body through which 'almost all sectors of large-scale primary and secondary industry'¹ channelled their donations to the U.A.P.

The political activities of the Union's members and those closely associated with them were not confined only to collecting and disbursing party funds. At times the Union became deeply involved in party affairs, as for example when it helped to engineer Lyons' split with the Labor Party and his replacement of Latham as leader of the U.A.P.;² or when it encouraged R.G. Menzies to move into federal politics in 1934;³ or, again, when, on Lyons' death in 1939, it pressed for S.M. Bruce's succession to leadership of the U.A.P.⁴ There is also evidence that on occasions the Union attempted to influence the selection of candidates for parliament.⁵ Another of its roles, as we have already seen, was to attempt to bring about the organisational

¹Ibid., p.163.

²Ibid., pp.101, 166.

³Ibid., pp.171-3.

⁴Ibid., p.167.

⁵Letter, Sir Wilfred Kent Hughes to writer, 10 February 1969; Graham, 'Finance Committees', in Hughes, p.371.

unity of the non-Labor forces, especially in the earlier years of the period. By the beginning of the 1940s, however, the Union's involvement in the party's affairs was a divisive rather than a unifying influence. While performing a necessary function for the U.A.O. as it was then constituted and run, the Union became an intense irritant to sections of the party, as will be shown in the next chapter.

Although after 1910 non-Labor based its electoral organisation on the mass-party model with branches, electorate committees and conferences controlled by an elected executive, over the years its efforts to maintain such a structure were sporadic and often ineffective. Lacking a large membership and dependent on financial donations from outside the party, non-Labor conformed as much to the 'cadre' as the mass model of party organisation.¹ Primarily, non-Labor's extra-parliamentary structure was intended to provide a basis for organising election campaigns, an opportunity for supporters to participate in political activities, and a mechanism for selecting and endorsing parliamentary candidates. Traditional non-Labor doctrines denied the 'outside' bodies (as the extra-parliamentary structures were sometimes called) any authority over its members' parliamentary activities. Determining party policy

¹See Duverger, Political Parties, pp.62-71.

was thus the prerogative of the parliamentary leaders. Pressures from the non-parliamentary sections there undoubtedly were, ranging from the suspected clandestine activities of the influential National Union, to conventional pressure-group styles of activity. Annual conferences gave activists a forum from which to influence party policy on various matters, but the politicians were not bound to act on conference resolutions. Consequently the deliberations of conferences were supplemented by the techniques of deputation and the circulation of policy recommendations to all politicians - a practice often followed by the A.W.N.L. To give one example only, in 1923 the Argus reported that representatives of the National Federation, led by a Nationalist M.L.C., had spent a day 'waiting upon various Ministers to urge reforms - the subjects of resolutions passed at the annual conference' in the previous year.¹

Policy-making activities were an unimportant influence on the functioning of non-Labor's organisation during the period under study. Neither the party's institutional structure nor its internal procedures and channels of communication were significantly adjusted to the purpose of shaping party policy. Apart from the Conference there was little provision for (nor perhaps demand from) activists to examine aspects of party policy and formulate recommendations. Early in the period, committees of representatives from rural and

¹Argus, 15 August 1923.

metropolitan electorates were reported to have forwarded resolutions to individual ministers,¹ but there is no evidence of the formation of 'policy committees' within the party's State Council or Central Executive comparable with those set up by the Y.N.O. - much less the present Liberal Party.²

After 1910, non-Labor adopted, albeit somewhat resentfully at first in some quarters,³ a method of pre-selecting parliamentary candidates in which party members in the various electorates were given a greater say than hitherto in the choice of the candidates. Pre-selection was commonly regarded as a device for concentrating the anti-Labor vote and creating a more solid parliamentary group which had been 'forced on Liberalism'⁴ by Labor's disciplined techniques. The Argus, however, saw another advantage in the practice: it suggested that the introduction of pre-selection involving local party activists might result in the choice of more attractive candidates. It complained that,

[under a system in which] the Ministry in consultation with its supporters, is the sole authority for making the selection, it too frequently happens that members are nominated time after time who are notorious failures and mere party hacks.⁵

¹Ibid., 8 February 1922.

²See below, p.212.

³E.g., by some parliamentary members (Argus, 13 July 1911).

⁴Ibid., 2 September 1910. See also Liberal, Vol.1, No.4, October 1911, p.80.

⁵Argus, 12 July 1911.

Pre-selection thus became one of the most important activities of the electoral organisations. Nevertheless, it took time for the practice to be fully accepted. After preferential voting had been introduced for Victorian state elections in 1911, and for federal elections in 1918, some activists argued that pre-selection was unnecessary and should be abandoned. In 1919, however, an interstate convention of delegates from Nationalist organisations reaffirmed, by twenty-six votes to five, the continuation of pre-selection - on the grounds that other parties concentrated their resources behind selected candidates and it was therefore necessary for the Nationalists to follow suit to compete against them.¹

Despite this, at several subsequent annual conferences of the Victorian National Federation, some branches continued to submit resolutions calling for the abolition of pre-selection.² As late as 1928 it was still thought necessary to defend pre-selection in the Federation's annual report, on the ground that it was an essential device in the 'fight against a closely organised and highly disciplined Labour party'.³

¹Ibid., 3 July 1919. The organisations represented were: National Federation, A.W.N.L., (Victoria); National Association (N.S.W.); Liberal Union, (S.A.); Queensland Women's Electoral League, National Democratic Council, (Q); National Council of Women, National Federation, Liberal League, (W.A.); two representatives from Tasmania (ibid.).

²Ibid., 8 September 1922; 1 September 1923.

³Ibid., 18 September 1928.

The strongest rearguard action on this matter came from the high-principled ladies of the A.W.N.L. At its annual conference in 1920 the League rejected outright the practice of pre-selection.¹ This created an awkward situation for the National Federation, since the pre-selection of non-Labor candidates was based on joint conventions of activists from the branches of the Federation and the A.W.N.L. To conciliate the League, the Federation finally suspended its constitutional rule requiring candidates, before they faced the selection convention, to pledge their withdrawal from the contest if not selected.² Unsuccessful candidates could thus contest elections without forfeiting their party affiliation - which is one of the purposes of pre-selection.³ This concession appears to have made little difference in practice to the working of the pre-selection procedure, but it achieved its aim of improving relations between the two organisations.⁴

¹Ibid., 8 September 1920. The following resolution was passed unanimously:

'That, preferential voting having become law, [this Conference] urges Parliament, in order to make that law effective, to introduce legislation that shall make it illegal for any political organisation to pre-select candidates...'

²Ibid., 8 July, 23 September 1925.

³In 1927 Sir Wilfred Kent Hughes made use of this change of rule to successfully oppose the endorsed Nationalist candidate, E.R.T. Reynolds, in the state seat of Kew (Kew Advertiser, 10 February 1927).

⁴Argus, 14 September 1926.

The organisational structure of the U.A.P., and the functions performed by its extra-parliamentary bodies were not fundamentally different from those of the Liberal and Nationalist parties that had preceded it. The exceptions to this generalisation were the presence and role of the Y.N.O., and the greater influence of the National Union. If defects in the organisation of the U.A.P. are to be regarded as a factor contributing to its electoral and parliamentary decline, and the consequent formation of the present Liberal Party, then attention must be focussed on the growing cleavage within the party between the U.A.O. and the Y.N.O. and, secondly, on the disruptive influence of the National Union.

CHAPTER 3

THE FORMATION OF THE LIBERAL PARTY IN VICTORIA

The Liberal Party of Australia was formed at two conferences in 1944, the first at Canberra on 13-16 October, when eighteen non-Labor organisations from all states agreed on a name and objectives for the new party, the second at Albury in December, when the party was officially constituted.

In February 1945 the federal parliamentary U.A.P. changed its name to Liberal and the Victorian state parliamentary party followed suit early in March. Between February and June a provisional State Executive organised numerous public meetings throughout the Melbourne suburbs and within the main country towns, and so established the outlines of the party's branch structure. By the end of June, there were 127 branches in the state (including sixty in the country) and nearly 21,000 members had been enrolled.¹ In this flurry of organisational activity the Victorian Division of the Liberal Party replaced the United Australia Party and the electoral organisations associated with it.

The decline of the U.A.P. and the emergence of the Liberal Party are complementary themes in recent Australian political history. The period of the U.A.P. was an unheroic one in non-Labor history in general, and conspicuously so from the perspective of the Victorian (and N.S.W.) parties. From the Victorian view-

¹Argus, 20 June 1945.

point it was a frustrating period of continuous electoral decline (Table 3.1), resulting in the U.A.P.'s loss of office as early as 1935 at state level and, in 1941, the parliamentary defeat of the federal Country-U.A.P. coalition and the advent of a Labor government under John Curtin. Moreover, the Victorian section of the U.A.P. was disturbingly implicated in the latter series of events.

TABLE 3.1

SEATS WON BY ENDORSED U.A.P. CANDIDATES

	1931	1932	1934	1935	1937	1940	1943
Federal: All states	40 ^a		28		28	23	12
Federal: Victoria	12		11		9	6	6
Victoria: Legislative Assembly		31		25	21	16	13

^a Includes the six seats won by the Emergency Committee (S.A.).

Source: Hughes and Graham, A Handbook of Australian Government and Politics.

Against this background of electoral decline, the various elements associated with the U.A.P. in Victoria never settled down to function as an integrated party structure. Disagreements over policy, leadership and tactics within the state parliamentary party spilled over into the electoral organisations. Far from helping to check the loss of parliamentary cohesion, the party's divided organisational structure harboured disunity, different

parliamentary groups tending to find a base of support in different sections of the non-parliamentary organisation. Between 1935 and 1941, the U.A.O. was publicly abused by its own supporters; the Young Nationalists developed an aggressive autonomy; and the state parliamentary leader openly challenged the clandestine influence of the National Union.

PROBLEMS AT STATE LEVEL

Until 1941 state politics dominated the internal life of the party's organisation in Victoria, for the party's parliamentary decline began earlier at state than federal level. The difference was that in state politics the Country Party, benefiting from an electoral system highly biased in its favour,¹ and shrewdly (if somewhat unscrupulously) led by A.A. Dunstan,² acquired a unique parliamentary strength which enabled it to form the only all-C.P. ministries in Australia.

TABLE 3.2

BALANCE OF PARTIES IN THE VICTORIAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY 1932-43

/over

¹Between 1926 and 1943 the value of 100 city votes declined from forty-seven country votes to thirty-nine. See table in S.R. Davis (ed.), The Government of the Australian States, London, 1960, p.223.

²See J.B. Paul, The Premiership of Sir Albert Dunstan, M.A. thesis, Melbourne, 1960.

TABLE 3.2
BALANCE OF PARTIES IN THE VICTORIAN LEGISLATIVE
ASSEMBLY 1932-43

Election	No. seats won by :			
	U.A.P.	Country	Labor	Others
1932	31	14	16	4
1935	25	20	17	3
1937	21	20	20	4
1940	16	22	22	5
1943	13	18	22	12

Source: Hughes and Graham, A Handbook of Australian Government and Politics.

As a result, after sharing the government with the Country Party between 1932 and 1935, the U.A.P. languished in opposition for eight years until, in September 1943, it entered as junior partner into a new composite ministry. From 1935 to 1943, however, the Country Party, with the support of Labor, held office under the premiership of Albert Dunstan. The U.A.P. was therefore cast in the unfamiliar role of official opposition to a party with which it was often not in fundamental disagreement and which it conventionally regarded as its natural anti-Labor ally. The disagreements over policy and parliamentary tactics aroused by this situation only added to the strain on party cohesion caused by a long period out of office. This was evident, for example, in the formation within the parliamentary party in 1936 of a cave of

eight members, which referred to itself as the Country-Liberal section of the U.A.P.¹ The group, led by I. Macfarlan (Brighton), could see no political sense in rigidly playing the role of opposition to a C.P. ministry, a tactic which, the members of the group argued, was likely to further weaken country support for the U.A.P. The Country-Liberals therefore moved to the cross benches, reserving the right to support the Dunstan government on certain measures and criticising the conservatism of the U.A.P. under Sir Stanley Argyle's leadership.² In the following year the Country-Liberal group disbanded, but two of its members, Macfarlan and F.C.T. Holden (Grant), broke from the U.A.P. and declared themselves Independents.³

Successive electoral reverses⁴ evoked loud cries from dismayed activists, rebellious politicians and a disillusioned press for a revival of the U.A.P. and its organisation. It was common knowledge that the extra-parliamentary structure of the U.A.P. was feeble, with branches inactive between elections and often reduced to two or three 'permanent' office-bearers. One

¹Argus, 15 July 1936.

²Ibid., 31 July 1936. For earlier criticism of the U.A.P. by Macfarlan see *ibid.*, 10 May 1935.

³Ibid., 14, 20 October 1937.

⁴In addition to its defeats in state general elections, the U.A.P. suffered a series of by-election losses, thus: Benambra to C.P., October 1932; Gunbower to C.P., May 1934; Allandale to Labor, March 1936; Polwarth to C.P., November 1940.

critic perceptively summed it up thus:

The root of the trouble...lies in the executive of the organisation. It has failed to do the essential elementary work of a political organisation...Holding a conference once a year and getting feverishly busy when an election comes along, with lapses of complete apathy in between, is not the way to build up an organisation and keep it effective.

What is wanted is the steady routine of creating branches, keeping them alive, checking and building up membership, and making the branches realise that there is an executive at headquarters that is interested in what they are doing and how they do it.¹

This state of affairs was the result of a trend over some years. Especially in many country electorates, the grass-roots organisation had been allowed to decline after the mid-twenties. Since then, with composite U.A.P.-Country Party ministries in office for much of the time at both state and federal levels, one of the main incentives for organising activity - that of combating electoral defeats - had been lacking. Yet after 1935, despite the state party's estranged relationship with the C.P., the U.A.O. still made no attempt to revive its local organisation in rural electorates -- or any others. The organisational leaders were afraid of disturbing the existing federal coalition and also of lessening the chances of reviving the alliance at state level.² Another reason, however, was that rebuilding an electorate organisation in country areas would have demanded organisers and

¹Ibid., 13 June 1938.

²Ibid., 24, 30 September 1936.

money to pay them. There is some evidence that the National Union had insufficient finance available for this purpose over and above that required to meet the expense of elections; it was certainly unable at this time to assist with funds for organisers in other states,¹ but it is equally likely that the members of the National Union, who were more concerned with federal than state non-Labor politics, were also determined not to launch an organising crusade which might disturb the federal coalition. Nothing was done and the U.A.O. remained, in the words of the Argus, a structure 'alive without much sign of life'.²

While the U.A.O. had largely ceased to attract the loyalty of non-Labor sympathisers (like the Argus), they viewed the Y.N.O. and the A.W.N.L. more favourably. The latter bodies were credited with an enthusiasm and an organisational efficiency lacking in the U.A.O.³ They were praised for bearing the burden of non-Labor's election campaigns, and the Y.N.O. was also acclaimed as a source of progressive policies and, on at least one occasion, as the basis of a new party to replace the U.A.P.⁴

Conflicts within the party structure tended to follow institutional lines. In organisational style, policies, public reputation and personalities the Young Nationalists were increasingly divided

¹Hart, J.A. Lyons, p.164.

²Argus, 19 May 1938.

³Ibid., 4, 13 June 1938; F.W. Eggleston, Reflections of an Australian Liberal, p.132.

⁴Argus, 20 May 1938.

from the U.A.O. The two organisations disagreed, among other things, on the major issue of the leadership of the parliamentary party. Sir Stanley Argyle, who had led the state parliamentary U.A.P. since its formation, came under strong criticism from party members inside and out of parliament.¹ The Y.N.O. was numbered among Argyle's critics who believed that a younger leader and more 'progressive' policies (as well as organisational reform) were needed to restore the party's electoral appeal.² The leaders of the U.A.O., however, remained loyal to Argyle.³

The positions were reversed after Argyle's death in November 1940, when his deputy, T.T. Hollway (Ballarat), was elected unopposed by the parliamentary party to succeed him as party leader. At thirty-four Hollway's 'youth' fulfilled at least one of the conditions which Argyle's critics had regarded as necessary to restore the party's tarnished image; his professed penchant for organisational reform appeared to meet another.⁴ Yet the change of leadership solved none of the party's intra-organisational disputes. Rather it intensified them: the parliamentary party and the U.A.O. were launched on a

¹Ibid., 10, 11 June 1938.

²Ibid., 18, 20, 21 May 1938; 7 June 1938; 18 August 1938.

³Thus at the Organisation's conference in 1938 a motion which, in calling for a 'vigorous policy' and 'virile leadership' in state parliament, clearly implied a criticism of Argyle, was withdrawn at the request of the president of the U.A.O., T.S. Austin (Ibid., 28 September 1938).

⁴Australian Statesman, Vol. 11, No.10, October 1941, p.45; Vol.11, No.2, February 1941, p.2; Vol.11, No.11, November 1941, p.2.

collision course and the role of the National Union emerged as a new element in the conflict. Within a year of Hollway's taking office, intra-party relations in Victoria reached a state of crisis which was terminated more by the trauma of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour than as a result of any internal party solution.

The crisis was thrown into the open in November 1941 by a seemingly innocuous remark made by Hollway to the annual conference of the U.A.O. Referring to the need for a 'spring cleaning' of the U.A.P., he stated that the party would soon consider a broadening of its programme 'on more liberal lines' and the establishment of more branches throughout the state, adding that when the state parliamentary session was over U.A.P. parliamentarians would conduct a series of public meetings to attempt to revive interest in the party, especially in country areas.¹ A week later, T.S. Austin, president of the U.A.O., published a scathing rejoinder through the correspondence columns of the press. He began by correcting Hollway's loose reference to branches of the U.A.P. — when he meant U.A.O. — and went on to point out that the Executive of the U.A.O. had heard nothing of the Hollway plan for reviving the branches, adding further that just as the Organisation left the parliamentarians free once elected, so the parliamentary members had 'no say whatever in the control of the U.A.O.' Austin then referred disapprovingly to the rumoured proposals for 'a political alliance between the U.A.P. and the Labour party',

¹Herald, 7 November 1941.

and concluded with a disparaging allusion to Hollway's failure to enlist in the Second A.I.F.¹

The key to the political, as distinct from the personal, basis of this attack was the reference to a political alliance with Labor. Such a contentious alliance had in fact been discussed, albeit tentatively. Its object was to secure an electoral redistribution which would have eliminated some of the existing extreme bias towards rural areas.² Austin, however, in his presidential address to the U.A.O. Conference, had made it plain that an alliance with Labor was 'in conflict with the ideas of the organisation' and would not be tolerated.³ The Young Nationalists on the other hand were more sympathetic towards the idea,⁴ and the A.W.N.L. took the view that, although there could be no alliance on questions of general principle, there was no reason not to cooperate over specific measures 'to ensure necessary reforms'.⁵

In this incident the real foe in Hollway's eyes was not Austin or the U.A.O., but the National Union for which Austin, on this occasion, was the mouthpiece.⁶ Parliamentarians had expressed irrita-

¹ Argus, 13 November 1941.

² Herald, 13 November 1941; Australian Statesman, Vol.11, No.11, November 1941, p.2. The previous redistribution had been in 1926.

³ Argus, 7 November 1941.

⁴ Australian Statesman, Vol.11, No.11, November 1941, p.3.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Argus, 13, 15, 19 November 1941; letter, the Hon. T.T. Hollway to writer, 13 January 1969.

tion over the activities of this body in the past,¹ but Hollway now assailed it with unprecedented rancour, hitting out at the influence wielded by 'the financial moguls' who ran the National Union:

Control of the party by this group has laid a dead hand on previous attempts which have been made to make the party more democratic. From early in my leadership of the party it became apparent that my views, which, incidentally, are the views of the majority of my colleagues, were too liberal for this non-elected group of King-makers.²

The crisis brought the lines of division between the party institutions clearly into focus. The parliamentary party fell in behind their leader, reaffirming their confidence in him at a special meeting at which they also stated their determination to resist outside control of the party by a 'small junta of industrialists and businessmen';³ the Executive of the Y.N.O. unanimously condemned Austin's attack on Hollway,⁴ and the president of the A.W.N.L. dissociated the League from it.⁵ But with only one dissentient, the Executive of the U.A.O. approved their president's action in writing to the press.⁶

¹ Crisp, Australian National Government, p.206; Herald, 13 November 1941.

² Argus, 13 November 1941.

³ Herald, 13 November 1941.

⁴ Argus, 14 November 1941.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 21 November 1941. It is not known, however, how fully attended this meeting was. Hollway, for example, maintained that 'at least some members of the executive' disagreed strongly with Austin's action (ibid., 15 November 1941).

The breach with the National Union having gone this far, Hollway was determined to pursue the issue to the point of reorganising (or at least reconstituting) the party so as to lessen the Union's influence,¹ an objective which met with the wholehearted approval of the politicians.² Although he stated no plan explicitly, Hollway appeared to envisage in the place of the National Union a finance committee whose members were known to the parliamentary party and were 'elected by the organisation'.³ On the question of breaking with the National Union and reconstituting the party, he could expect support in diminishing order from the parliamentary party, the Y.N.O., the A.W.N.L. and least of all from the U.A.O., which was 'largely satisfied with the existing constitution'.⁴ The state parliamentary party appointed T.T. Hollway, T.D. Oldham (deputy leader), A. Michaelis (parliamentary party secretary) and T.K. Maltby to act as a committee to discuss reorganisation with other sections of the party.⁵

¹Ibid., 17, 19 November 1941.

²Ibid., 19 November 1941.

³Ibid., 21 November 1941. A few days before this he had referred heatedly to the need for a party whose rank and file membership was in control of its finances and the selection of its parliamentary candidates (ibid., 17 November 1941). These were to become basic principles of the Liberal Party.

⁴Ibid., 22 November 1941.

⁵Ibid., 19 November 1941. The first three members of the committee were known to be antipathetic to the U.A.O. Oldham, for example, had sparked off an outburst of criticism of the party in 1938 (ibid., 18 May 1938), while Michaelis, two days after the committee was appointed, remarked pungently:

The U.A.O. really takes itself much too seriously...It has consisted for some years of a central office and a few live
(cont.)

The move for reform soon broke down; the intransigent Hollway and his parliamentary supporters overplayed their hand in favouring the Young Nationalists at the expense of the U.A.O. At a meeting of the parliamentary party they rejected a request by the U.A.O. for a conference to discuss organisational reform, yet agreed to meet the representatives of the Y.N.O.¹ In what was the first sign of a split in the parliamentary ranks, Maltby dissociated himself from this decision and, shortly after, ceased to attend party meetings.² Meanwhile, the A.W.N.L. indicated that it would stand aside from further discussions on party reorganisation 'until the men's sections had settled their differences'.³

Hollway's tactical position had thus weakened perceptibly; the Y.N.O. was his last resort. On 9 December (two days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour) a special general meeting of the Young Nationalists was convened to consider a resolution calling for its separation from the U.A.O.:

'The Y.N.O. is dissatisfied with the reactionary policy and undemocratic organisation of the U.A.O. in Victoria and is unable to continue to associate with it. The Y.N.O. is resolved to operate henceforth as an independent political entity...'⁴

branches, with a number of dummies. But for the most part it is a robot which at election times goes through the motions of being alive. I have never placed much reliance on its help, but on the other hand I have always been given strong support by the local branches of the A.W.N.L. and Y.N.O., both of which have many active workers (ibid., 21 November 1941).

¹ Ibid., 26 November 1941.

² Ibid., and 3 December 1941.

³ Ibid., 26 November 1941.

⁴ Ibid., 10 December 1941.

Hollway attended and, speaking against the U.A.O., urged that the meeting pass the resolution. Also at the meeting to add their moral support to Hollway's stand were A. Michaelis, T.D. Oldham, H.E. Thonemann and the federal M.P.s, R.S. Ryan, H.E. Holt, and Senator J.A. Spicer. Despite Hollway's appeal and the strong support for the resolution given by the president and a vice-president of the Y.N.O., it narrowly failed to gain the necessary two-thirds majority.¹ Despite the treasurer's assurances that adequate funds could be obtained, there was some doubt expressed by critics of the resolution as to whether the Y.N.O. could finance itself as a separate organisation.² Most opposition to the resolution, however, was based on the argument - persuasive under the circumstances -- that the party organisation should not be split at the critical and menacing time of the onset of war in the Pacific. For the time being the moves for organisational reform were checked.

The incidents in 1941 primarily involved the state U.A.P. and followed lines of cleavage which had appeared several years before. Victorian federal politicians took part only tentatively in the dispute, contributing a less parochial note to the demand for party reform, but adding little impetus to it. Thus at the end of a conference between the Victorian federal parliamentarians and the members of the state parliamentary committee on party organisation, R.G. Menzies, leader of

¹Ibid. See also Australian Statesman, Vol.11, No.12, December 1941, p.2; Vol.12, No.3, March 1942, p.2. Voting was forty-two in favour and twenty-three against the resolution.

²Ibid., Vol.11, No.12, December 1941, p.2.

the federal parliamentary party, and Hollway issued a joint statement announcing that:

It was unanimously agreed that there should be, as soon as possible, a revision and restatement of policy of the party, and that on the basis of such policy, there should be a vigorous reconstruction of the party's organisation. As it was felt that these matters should not be discussed simply on a Victorian basis, Federal members agreed to take up with the Federal Parliamentary UAP the question of the convening of a policy conference, at which all States could be represented.¹

The statement carefully avoided any reference to the specific issues of the dispute, Menzies no doubt being concerned not to become directly involved in a confrontation with the National Union. At the same time, from the tenor of the statement, it is clear that Menzies' sympathies were more with Hollway than with the U.A.O. or the National Union,² and Hollway for his part felt that the response of the federal parliamentarians reinforced his demand for party reorganisation.³ The issuing of the joint statement and more generally the fact that the federal parliamentarians (and notably Menzies) took any part at all in the dispute, signified the growing importance of federal events in intra-party relations which, for several years before 1941, had been dominated by state politics. In that year, however, state issues can be seen to have become tributary to the mainstream of federal events flowing from

¹Argus, 25 November 1941.

²This is not surprising since the National Union had 'strongly opposed' Menzies' accession to leadership of the U.A.P. in 1939 (Hart, p.167).

³Argus, 26 November 1941.

Menzies' resignation in August 1941 to the parliamentary defeat of the non-Labor coalition and the advent of a Labor government five weeks later, and eventually to the crushing defeat of the U.A.P. in the federal elections of 1943.

For party activists in Victoria the downfall of the federal U.A.P. was all the more disillusioning for being prefaced by Menzies' humiliation.¹ Menzies had a strong base of grass-roots support in sections of the Victorian party's organisation, especially in the Y.N.O.,² the A.W.N.L. and the unusually active Kew branch of the U.A.O. The resolution passed with acclamation by the latter on the occasion of Menzies' resignation captures the sentiment of loyalty towards him, which permeated the Victorian Division:

...this meeting...regrets the recent political events in Canberra: it records its unbounded confidence in its Federal Member [Menzies] and believes that he now stands even higher in the estimation of the public than ever before.³

The second blow to Victorian activists was the defeat of the Country-U.A.P. coalition led by Menzies' successor, A.W. Fadden, leader of the federal C.P. In the budget debate on 30 October, two Victorians, A. Wilson, Independent (Wimmera) and A.W. Coles, nominally U.A.P. (Henty), voted with the Labor Party to defeat the government. Coles was regarded as particularly culpable by the Victorian organisation for his part in

¹See Paul Hasluck, The Government and the People 1939-1941, Canberra, 1953, pp. 491-505, for a full account of the circumstances of Menzies' resignation.

²E.g. see Australian Statesman, Vol. 12, No.3, March 1942, p.2.

³Report of annual meeting of Kew branch of U.A.O., 17 September 1941 (misc. papers held by C.P. Moulton, Melbourne).

this act of 'inexcusable disloyalty and selfishness'.¹ For, although contesting Henty as an Independent, he had won election not only with the strong backing of the local organisation in the electorate but with the official, if in a sense gratuitous, endorsement of the U.A.O.² Moreover, in June 1941, he had joined the parliamentary U.A.P. and attended party meetings only to break from it again on the occasion of Menzies' resignation.³ Coles' action in voting with the Labor Party not only embittered many Victorian activists towards him, but, because of the manner in which he won his seat, it also increased their disenchantment with the existing party organisation and its procedures. The Y.N.O.,

¹ Australian Statesman, Vol.12, No.5, May 1942, p.2.

² Coles at the time of his election was managing director, G.J. Coles Ltd., and Mayor of Melbourne since 1938. His position in the party was as ambiguous as the manner in which he was recruited to parliament. In January 1940 it was reported that Coles, after being approached by Menzies, had expressed willingness to contest the Corio by-election if endorsed by the U.A.P. (Argus, 22 January 1940). On this occasion, however, he neither sought pre-selection nor contested the seat. Then, in August, he announced that he would contest the seat of Henty in the forthcoming general elections (*ibid.*, 19 August 1940). Two days later, G.S. MacLean, general secretary of the U.A.O., issued a statement indicating that the organisation was constitutionally entitled to endorse more than one candidate in an electorate and would be likely to do so if a selection convention recommended this action (*ibid.*, 21 August 1940). But again Coles did not contest the pre-selection and, at the Henty convention, representatives from branches of the U.A.O., A.W.N.L. and Y.N.O. selected R.S. Ryan. The convention, however, also recommended that Coles be given the full support of the U.A.P. (*ibid.*, 30 August 1940). The Executive of the U.A.O. rapidly complied by endorsing both Ryan and Coles (*ibid.*, 31 August 1940). In the event Ryan did not contest Henty, but instead secured the endorsement for Flinders. Coles, in his campaign, claimed that he was standing 'independent of party promises', but would support the U.A.P.-Country Party government if a 'National' (i.e. wartime all-party) government proved impossible (*ibid.*).

³ Hasluck, p.504; Argus, 24 June 1943.

for example, retrospectively interpreted Coles' election in Henty as an example of the machinations of influential persons working through the U.A.O. in the party's recruitment and selection process, and voiced its suspicion on this matter at the special general meeting called to consider the break from the U.A.O., in December 1941.¹

NEW ORGANISATIONS 1942-3

The 'little rebellion'² against the National Union and the U.A.O., which was staged at the end of 1941 by the state parliamentarians and the Y.N.O. with the tentative support of some federal M.P.s, came to nothing. Two years later, when reform of the party organisation again became a prominent issue in Victoria, the party situation was vastly changed by the presence of new influential actors on the anti-Labor scene.

The middle-class is politically most active when a national crisis coincides with a federal Labor government -- as during Scullin's depression regime of 1929-31, or the wartime years of the Curtin government after 1941. On both occasions heightened political emotions found an outlet in the formation of new organisations. In 1942-3, wartime anxieties and the presence of a hostile party in power produced within the anti-Labor section of the electorate an emotional climate of which the dominant element was middle-class paranoia tinged, as the times dictated, with patriotism and a peculiarly moralistic view of politics.

¹Australian Statesman, Vol.11, No.12, December 1941, p.2.

²Letter, the Hon. T.T. Hollway to writer, 13 January 1969.

There was little of policies but ample emotion in the organising imperatives of the new groups which sprang up in 1942-3 - the Services and Citizens Party, the Middle Class Party, and the embryonic Non-Party Movement. Their respective leaders saw a threat to the social order in the activities of organised labour (the 'Trades Hall') and in the government's apparent connivance at these. In addition they regarded the continuation of party politics at a time of national crisis as evidence of the abandonment of political ethics. They thus spoke of the need 'to implant the service spirit in citizen life', of removing 'the sordid and selfish'¹ from politics and of cleansing and regenerating it.² The Services and Citizens Party, its leaders explained, was dedicated to:

the honest, decent, unselfish middle class citizen...
the great middle class, which the present regime would
gladly grind out of existence.³

They depicted the middle class as:

...that cross section of the community which is fundamentally sound and fit to govern -- that body which has hitherto been busy producing, building, and carrying the burden of responsibilities -- the backbone of the community which pays its taxes (including those of others), brings up families in decency, and gives its sons to fight for their country.⁴

¹ W.H. Anderson, The Aims and Objects of the Services and Citizens Party, text of address to Constitutional Club, Melbourne, 12 April 1943 (misc. papers held by the late Sir William Anderson, Melbourne).

² W.B. Edwards, The Ex-Serviceman and Politics, text of an address to Constitutional Club, Melbourne, 7 December 1942 (misc. papers, Sir William Anderson).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Anderson, Aims and Objects of the Services and Citizens Party.

A sense of dispossession also underlay the attempt to form the Middle Class Party. According to H.L. Dwyer, who chaired its inaugural meeting,

probably 80 per cent of the organising and executive ability of the community was supplied by the middle class... the middle class was totally unrepresented in any of the Parliaments. Yet the outlook of the middle class was broader than any other, and the middle class was thereby more competent to legislate for all classes of the community...than either of the extreme wings of political thought which were at present in control...¹

The Non-Party Movement in turn dedicated itself to the 'promotion of clean politics', to 'abolishing party politics', and to the 'breaking down of class barriers, and united action by independent men to obtain best results from democratic government'.²

It was a measure of the discredit into which the federal U.A.P. had fallen that these basically anti-Labor groups (especially the Middle Class and the Services and Citizens Parties) were organised to compete against it. Like the groups formed during the depression years, the new organisations did nothing to invigorate existing anti-Labor structures.

Services and Citizens Party

The Services and Citizens Party was initiated in November 1942 by members of the Returned Servicemen's League,³ and officially launched

¹Age, 9 April 1943.

²Argus, 6 April 1943.

³The constitution of the R.S.L. forbade official involvement in the affairs of a political party. But according to a left-wing press report, the preliminary planning of the Services and Citizens Party 'had the closest attention' of, among others, 'the Holland inner group of the R.S.L.' The report contended that 'either Holland or Joyce' had provided a list of League branches to the organisers of the party, thus enabling notices announcing a meeting for the purpose of establish-
(cont.)

as a political party, in February 1943, under the grandiose title of United Ex-Servicemen's and Women's Political Party of Australia.¹ It immediately attracted the favourable attention of Sir Keith Murdoch², whose newspapers commended the party's attitudes and objectives, but warned that as a self-designated 'Service party' it was restricting itself to a sectional role. The press advised the party that to attract the support it deserved it should widen its basis and present itself as a 'Servicemen's and Citizens' Party'.³ The party leaders responded promptly, but their first attempt to change the basis of the party failed at an unruly meeting on 29 March.⁴ A week later, however, a much larger and reputedly packed meeting ratified the party's translation into the Services and Citizens Party -- despite the protests of a group who, loyal to the original conception of the party, marched from the hall singing 'Onward Christian Soldiers'.⁵

ing the party to be sent to the branches. It added: 'The motion giving actual form to the party was moved (at the November conference) by a member of the Victorian executive of the League, a recognised Holland man' (Mid-Day Times, 10 April 1943). Sir George Holland was state president, R.S.L. (Victoria), 1929-51, and C.W. Joyce, state secretary, 1926-65.

¹ Argus, 22 February 1943.

² Managing director of The Herald and The Sun News-Pictorial (Melbourne); director of The Advertiser and The News (Adelaide) and The Courier Mail (Brisbane). Murdoch for some years had been active behind the scenes in non-Labor politics (Hart, p.87 ff., p.146 ff.).

³ Herald, 22 February 1943; Sun News-Pictorial, 23 February 1943.

⁴ Age, 30 March 1943.

⁵ Ibid., 6 April 1943; Sun, 6 April 1943. The 'rebels' formed a Services Party of their own and nominated one candidate in the 1943 federal elections.

Shortly after it was launched the party boasted 'about 700' members,¹ but it never developed an extensive rank-and-file organisation. Nor, despite the patronage of the Murdoch press, did it attract any significant electoral support; it did not nominate candidates for the state elections in June 1943, and only five contested federal seats in August, when the most successful candidate won 11 per cent of the primary vote. Throughout 1944, however, well-printed monthly newsletters written by W.H. Anderson were circulated to members of the party. The newsletters discussed topical political events and more general themes like 'Democracy', 'Private Enterprise', 'Education' and 'The Family'.

The prestige of the party was greater than its limited organisation and electoral success would suggest. Its Executive included men who were prominent in the Melbourne business community and who had access to the clubs and societies patronised by other leading citizens. Others of its members had an extensive background of political activism in non-Labor organisations.² Although the party claimed no formal connection with the National Service Group, which was formed under Menzies' leader-

¹Herald, 31 March 1943.

²The Executive included W.B. Edwards, associated with an offshoot of I.C.I.; W.H. Anderson, chief accountant for Shell Oil Coy. of Australia; J.P.C. Kennedy, associated with a firm of accountants, a partner in which was D.H. Giddy, chairman of the National Bank and a director of Sir Keith Murdoch's Melbourne Herald; A.C. Slater, a senior official of Shell; Sidney Birrell, executive member of the Young Nationalists in 1936 and a member of Legacy; Vinton Smith, president of Young Nationalists, 1934, M.L.A. Oakleigh, 1932-40, contested Corio, 1940; Col. J.S. Shaw, an ex-manager of the National Bank; Major D.Radclyffe, paid secretary of the Young Nationalists, 1936-43; Major C.K.S.Foreman, Executive of Young Nationalists, 1936; and Brig. F.E. Lind (Mid-Day Times, 10 April 1943).

ship within the federal U.A.P. at the same time as the Services and Citizens Party was being launched,¹ there were strong personal ties and a similarity of rhetoric between the two.² The standing of the Services and Citizens Party was such that it was to be involved on equal terms with the main political organisations in the negotiations for non-Labor unity which preceded the Canberra conference, and at the conference itself.

Middle Class Party

The Middle Class Party was launched in April 1943 from a base composed of white collar organisations 'not affiliated with the trade unions' — banking, insurance, accounting and teaching organisations. 'Representatives' from these organisations attended the inaugural meeting of the party, which was chaired by H.L. Dwyer, president of the Australian Bank Officials' Association.³ The party's rudimentary organisation lacked the prestige and political resources enjoyed by the Services and Citizens Party; its leaders were not prominent men and their organisation does not appear to have extended beyond an executive committee. Only three Middle Class Party candidates contested seats in the 1943 federal elections. Their capacity to win votes was about the same as that of candidates from the Services and Citizens Party and they

¹W.B. Edwards, Something About the Services and Citizens Party, text of address to Geelong Legacy Club, 12 April 1943 (misc. papers, Sir William Anderson).

²Argus, 3 April 1943. Sir Keith Murdoch appeared to be pressing for a more formal association between the National Service Group and its non-parliamentary approximate namesake (Herald, 13 April 1943).

³Age, 9 April 1943.

won between 7 and 13 per cent of the primary vote. Unlike the Services and Citizens Party, however, the Middle Class organisation played no part in the formation of the Liberal Party. Its leaders declined an invitation to attend the unity discussions with other non-Labor organisations in 1944,¹ and they sent no representatives to the subsequent Canberra conference.

Kooyong Citizens' Association

The third political organisation to appear in 1942-43 was of a different order to the previous two. The Kooyong Citizens' Association was a local organisation formed on 22 June 1943² in Menzies' electorate of Kooyong. Organised by and around activists in the Kew branch of the U.A.O., its primary purpose was to act as a campaign committee for Menzies.³ The Association flourished in the favourable environment of upper-middle-class Kooyong. Charging an annual subscription of a minimum of five shillings, it had a membership in November 1944 of 691, divided into eleven groups throughout the electorate.⁴ Two observers from the Association attended the Canberra conference and the K.C.A. also provided a healthy basis for the formation in February 1945 of the first three

¹Notes of meeting September 5, 1944 (I.P.A. file, 'Minutes of Unity Meetings 1944').

²Kew Advertiser, 8 July 1943.

³G.K. Gregson, president of the K.C.A., 1943-4, was also president of the Kew branch of the U.A.O. with which he had been associated since the days of the National Federation (Kew Advertiser, 22 September 1927). Four other committee members of the K.C.A. were also prominent in the Kew branch of the U.A.O.

⁴Ibid., 8 July, 30 November 1944.

Liberal Party branches in Victoria.¹ The real point of interest in the Association, however, is the additional evidence its existence provides of the indifference of non-Labor activists towards identifying with the U.A.O. At grass-roots level the party label had ceased to function as a focus of loyalty: Menzies, not the party, was the basis of organisation in Kooyong.

The Institute of Public Affairs (I.P.A.)

The conventional view of the Australian party system sees the three main parties as associated with distinct economic interest groups -- the Labor Party with the trade unions, the C.P. with rural interests and the Liberal Party (and its predecessors) with business interests. To varying degrees the parties are financially subsidised by their supporting interests, which in turn may view the parties as spokesmen of their preferred policies or as political umbrellas, sheltering them from the policies and pressures of rival parties and groups.

The downfall of the federal U.A.P. left business interests (as it had left the middle-class) feeling politically exposed. By 1942 many businessmen held real fears for the future of private enterprise. They pointed to Labor's ideological commitment to the nationalisation of industry, to the favourable opportunity provided by the war for the extension of economic regulations and the likelihood of these continuing after the war, to the activities of the trade unions, and to the receptive mood of public opinion to criticism of employers and profits. The

¹ Argus, 7 February 1945.

last factor was attributed partly to the failure of industry in the past to provide regular employment and adequate wage levels, and partly to vigorous organised propaganda by the opponents of private enterprise.¹ The U.A.P., organisationally effete, bankrupt of ideas and declining in popular appeal, was blamed for the predicament in which business interests now found themselves:

In the political sphere the position of business appears to be dangerously weak. The present opposition, [the U.A.P.] which may be said to nominally represent business, does not appear to have succeeded in formulating views and policies which can be said to truly reflect those of the large majority of medium size and small business organisations. The fact that it has so far failed to evolve a definite, virile, and progressive policy with a strong appeal to the community as a whole is a serious flaw in the armour of business itself.²

In this situation a new element in anti-Labor politics after 1942 was the increased involvement of businessmen in political activity; if the Returned Servicemen's League provided the primary source of an emotional response by individual businessmen to the wartime Labor government, the Chamber of Manufactures was the locus of a more rational brand of anti-Labor politics.

In 1942 the Victorian Chamber of Manufactures began to consider creating a permanent secretariat to conduct a public relations campaign on behalf of manufacturing industry. C.D. Kemp (then personal assistant and economic adviser to Sir Herbert Gepp, managing director of Australian Paper Manufacturers) was invited to prepare a report on the structure and

¹Report to the Chamber of Manufactures on the formation of an Organisation to combat Socialism (in files of I.P.A.).

²Ibid.

scope of such a body. His report, which avowedly reflected many of Gepp's ideas, recommended an organisation representative of and supported by industrial interests and such other major sectors of private business as banking, retail and finance.¹ Closely modelled on the recommendations in this report, the Institute of Public Affairs was formed in September 1942.² Financed by business firms, it comprised a small professional and clerical staff under a director, and a controlling Executive and Editorial Committee elected by a Council of leading businessmen in various fields of private enterprise.³ The prime purpose of the Institute was to undertake research and conduct a public relations and educative campaign directed at businessmen, politicians and the general public.

¹The Institute of Public Affairs, I, The Early Years (typescript held by C.D. Kemp; I.P.A., Melbourne). For an excellent study of the formation and role of the I.P.A., see D.A. Kemp, The Institute of Public Affairs - Victoria 1942-47, B.A. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1963.

²Similar bodies were established in N.S.W. in February 1943, and in S.A. and Queensland in June 1943 (D.A. Kemp, p.5).

³Thus the members of the first Council were:

G.J. Coles (Chairman)	Chairman of directors, G.J. Coles & Co.
H.G. Darling	Chairman of directors, The Broken Hill Pty. Co.
Captain C.A.M. Derham	President, Victorian Chamber of Manufactures.
G.H. Grimwade	Director, Drug Houses of Australia.
H.R. Harper	General manager, The Victoria Insurance Co.
W.A. Ince	Lawyer and company director.
F.E. Lampe	President, Australian Council of Retailers.
Sir Walter Massy-Greene	Company director, farmer, Senator.
Sir Keith Murdoch	Chairman of directors, the <u>Herald & Weekly Times</u> .
L.J. McConnan	Chief manager, the National Bank of A/sia.
Cecil N. McKay	Managing director, H.V. McKay-Massey-Harris.
W.E. McPherson	Chairman of directors, McPherson's.
W.I. Potter	Founder, Ian Potter & Co. (sharebrokers).
A.G. Warner	Managing director, Electronic Industries.

Having no formal affiliation with a political party, the Institute purported to be a non-political body. But the boundary between political and non-political activity or organisations is a blurred one. In 1943, with the state elections falling in June and the even more crucial federal elections in August, the I.P.A. was almost inevitably drawn into direct political involvement on behalf of the U.A.P. Some of the members of the Council, such as G.J. Coles and Sir Keith Murdoch, had been deeply involved in non-Labor politics before this, and there was also some overlapping in personnel between the Council of the I.P.A. and the National Union.¹ The Institute therefore reinforced the organisation of the Victorian U.A.P., supplementing the finances available from the National Union, providing speakers' notes, conducting a publicity campaign through pamphlets, press and the radio, and keeping in constant touch with the parliamentary leaders and 'others in key positions'.²

NON-LABOR UNITY MOVES 1943-4

The 1943 federal elections resulted in a landslide to Labor; Labor's numbers in the House of Representatives were increased from thirty-two to forty-nine, out of a total of seventy-four. In Victoria, the results were somewhat less disastrous for the U.A.P.: no seats changed parties; but for anti-Labor partisans this was no consolation

¹Discussion with Representatives of the National Union, record of a meeting, 6 October 1943 (misc.file, I.P.A.).

²D.A. Kemp, Institute of Public Affairs, p.9. See also, misc. records, I.P.A., including: Notes on a meeting of candidates, 13 July 1943; meeting of publicity committee, 14 July 1943; text of five-minute
(cont.)

for the sweeping return to power of the Curtin government. The uneasiness voiced in Kemp's report to the Chamber of Manufactures in 1942 appeared justified. The U.A.P. was failing to present an effective alternative to the Labor Party. Business, noted G.H. Grimwade, a member of the I.P.A. Council, had been 'let down' by the U.A.P.:

The political forces opposed to socialism suffered two great handicaps -- parties and leaders which were short of a policy and out of touch with the people and with reality, and controlling party organisations which were virtually defunct and discredited.¹

The election aroused the question of organisational reform of the U.A.P. more prominently in Victoria than at any time since the end of 1941. Politicians, party activists and politically-involved businessmen shared a concern to strengthen the federal non-Labor forces. Thus, within weeks of the election, Menzies announced the need to rebuild the party,² and similar views were expressed publicly by other prominent members of the Victorian U.A.P. For example, H.E. Holt, M.P. (Fawkner) addressed the Melbourne branch of the A.W.N.L. on the theme of federal re-organisation,³ while T.K. Maltby, M.L.A. (Barwon), who, in the absence overseas of G.S. MacLean had been appointed organising secretary of the U.A.O., expressed the hope that before the next election a single anti-Labor federal organisation with 'uniform state branches within its framework' would be created.⁴

broadcast, 8 July; United Australia Organisation, Federal Election Publicity, approximate Budget of Expenditure (Victoria).

¹ Cited in C.D. Kemp, Big Businessmen. Four Biographical Essays, Melbourne, 1964, p.170.

² Australian Statesman, Vol. 13, No.9, September 1943, p.2.

³ Argus, 1 December 1943.

⁴ Ibid., 17 November 1943.

By its involvement in the 1943 election, the I.P.A. in effect had become a new element in the internal structure of the Victorian U.A.P. Some members of the Council of the I.P.A., however, believed that it should withdraw from its direct part in political activity and revert to its original 'non-political' role of research and public relations.¹ Yet it was soon obvious that in the short term the question was not whether the Institute would maintain its political involvement, but how and to what extent. This raised the problem of the relationship between the National Union and the I.P.A., the political functions of which overlapped. The Institute's political activities were resented by some members of the National Union, who argued that the Union's financial problems would be lessened if the Institute withdrew from the political arena and collected funds only for its public relations work.² In fact, however, the National Union shared the discredit of the U.A.P. Consequently its effectiveness as a finance-raising body had declined, many business firms preferring to channel their donations through the I.P.A. whose credentials were more attractive.³

A meeting between representatives of the two organisations early in October ended inconclusively; but it became clear to the I.P.A. that it had four alternatives in its relationship with the National Union: it could either assist with the revival of the Union, possibly by increasing

¹Kemp, Institute of Public Affairs, p.10.

²Discussion with Representatives of the National Union. The representatives were: National Union: Sir Robert Knox, Messrs. Turnbull, Coleman; I.P.A.: G.J. Coles, L.J. McConnan, W.I. Potter.

³Ibid.; Kemp, Institute of Public Affairs, p.9.

the Union's size and prestige through the inclusion of more members of the I.P.A.; it could replace the Union entirely (as the I.P.A. in N.S.W. had taken over the functions of the Consultative Council); it could maintain its present 'remote contacts' with the political organisation, offering them financial and secretarial assistance; or, finally, and the alternative it most preferred, it could co-operate with the Union and other bodies until a new political organisation had been established, when the Institute could either resume its present 'remote' position or concentrate entirely upon its public relations work.¹

One effect of the failure of the I.P.A. and the National Union to resolve the problem of their respective roles was to throw the course of events in Victoria out of phase with those in N.S.W. This, as it turned out, may have worked to the advantage of Victoria where the emergence of the Liberal Party was preceded by a far less stormy sequence of events than in N.S.W.

Several days after the discussions between the Victorian Institute and the National Union, an important conference was held between representatives of the two state Institutes.² In N.S.W. the anti-Labor parties (the U.A.P., Liberal Democratic Party and Commonwealth Party) had been completely routed in the 1943 federal elections, in which Labor

¹Discussion between members of the I.P.A. (N.S.W.) and I.P.A. (Victoria), held in Melbourne, October 11th and 12th, 1943 (misc. file, I.P.A.).

²Representatives of the Victorian Institute were: G.J. Coles, Sir Keith Murdoch, C.A.M. Derham, L.J. McComan, W.I. Potter, W.A. Ince, G.H. Grimwade. Representatives from N.S.W. were: Lloyd Jones, Sir Sydney Snow, Sir Norman Kater, A.E. Heath.

won twenty-one of the twenty-eight seats. With a state election due in May 1944, the I.P.A. (N.S.W.) was determined without delay to initiate moves to unify the organisation of the anti-Labor parties -- if possible in concert with similar moves in Victoria. The Victorian Institute, however, refused to commit itself to any course of political action when its relationship with the National Union was still not clear. As was observed in the I.P.A.'s report of the meeting:

If it were possible for the I.P.A. to co-operate with the National Union in this work, the problem would obviously be much simpler from the viewpoint of procedure than... were the I.P.A. to take over the full responsibility for political re-organisation. Obviously, therefore the I.P.A. Victoria must wait until the National Union had made its position clear.¹

Other significant interstate differences in the interpretation of the future role of the Institutes were also revealed at the meeting. Thus the N.S.W. body was adamant that it would retain its political role within any new party organisation, in particular in relation to finance and the selection of candidates.² It believed that long-range public relations work could be adequately handled by a secretariat in Canberra, reaching the business community or the general public through the various state Institutes. The Victorian I.P.A., however, still looked to the day when it could retreat from an active political role and believed that

¹Discussion between members of the I.P.A. (N.S.W.) and I.P.A. (Victoria).

²This attitude accurately foreshadowed the N.S.W. Institute's action in attempting to counter the first appeal for funds made by the Provisional Executive of the Liberal Party (N.S.W.) with an appeal of its own. See Parker, 'Group Interests and the Non-Labor Parties', in Readings in Australian Government, ed. Hughes, pp.389-90.

to be effective public relations work must be carried out by state organisations in close touch with the business community.¹

The meeting also provided a glimpse of future events when Menzies attended for a short time to outline his views on the feasibility of creating a new Australia-wide party. Menzies was convinced that a new party 'could and should be organised' with its headquarters in Canberra, a strong central secretariat, a vigorous electoral organisation employing paid organisers in key electorates, and 'a positive policy of liberalism'. The representatives of the I.P.A. responded warmly to Menzies. Their report noted:

Mr Menzies left the conference with the impression that he has the future organisation of a new party clearly developed in his mind. He strongly impressed all present, and there seemed little doubt that a new party organisation must look to him as the main focal point.²

It concluded with the observation that, regardless of whether Menzies was promised assistance by the Institute or the National Union, it was clear that he would 'set about originating an all-inclusive movement along liberal lines'.

If the unresolved problem of the relationship between the National Union and the I.P.A. helped to delay the beginning of non-Labor reorganisation in Victoria, so too did the spectacle of the collapse of such moves in N.S.W. Within a month of conferring with the Victorian I.P.A., the

¹Discussion between members of the I.P.A. (N.S.W.) and I.P.A. (Victoria).

²Ibid.

Institute in N.S.W. convened a meeting of representatives of the anti-Labor organisations as a step towards unity. The parties agreed in principle on the need for unity, but by the end of November attempts to achieve this had broken down.¹ The Victorian Institute kept a close watch on the course of events in N.S.W.,² and noted the disagreements over office accommodation and staff, the lukewarm press response to the unity moves and the cynicism or indifference of public opinion to an exercise widely regarded as 'painting up the U.A.P.'³

The Victorian Institute's own first cautious and unpublicised attempts to initiate unity moves in Victoria were also unsuccessful. The U.A.O. was unwilling to see included in any negotiations such groups as the Services and Citizens and Middle Class parties, which were not associated with the U.A.P. The U.A.O. still hoped to rejuvenate its own organisation rather than merge into a new or re-named party.⁴ Well before this, however, the I.P.A. had determined that political reform should involve as a first step an attempt 'to amalgamate all anti-socialist elements into one party' - and this specifically included the Services and Citizens and Middle Class parties. Subsequent steps would involve the formulation of 'a liberal policy' with a wide appeal, and the creation of a grass-roots organisation with the help of paid organisers.⁵

¹John R. Williams, 'The Emergence of the Liberal Party of Australia', Australian Quarterly, Vol.XXXIX, No.1, March 1967, pp.12-14.

²E.g., S.M.H. clippings, reports and correspondence (misc. file, I.P.A.).

³Dr Frank Louat to W.K. McConnell, 12 November 1943 (ibid.).

⁴Kemp, Institute of Public Affairs, pp.11-12; Argus, 17 November 1943; Interview, Sir Thomas Maltby, July 1967.

⁵Discussion with Representatives of the National Union.

It was not until June 1944, after the N.S.W. state elections had demonstrated once more the electoral consequences of anti-Labor disunity, that the first of several secret unity conferences sponsored by the I.P.A. was held in Victoria. The Institute provided the chairman and secretary¹ for these conferences, but in accordance with its 'non-political' posture it was not officially represented. The I.P.A.'s object was to bring the groups together, not dictate the terms of an amalgamation.

The first meeting on 5 June was attended by two representatives from each of the U.A.O., the Services and Citizens Party, the A.W.N.L. and the Young Nationalists.² It achieved little: the men's organisations went through the ritual of affirming their desire for unity, W.H. Anderson of the Services and Citizens Party, however, emphasising that co-operation between the organisations was 'not enough', and that a new party which was 'not the old one under a new name' should be formed. The A.W.N.L., true to tradition, stated that it wished to retain its identity and that it would withdraw from subsequent meetings. The delegates, however, agreed to keep the League informed of the progress of future meetings.³

At the second meeting, ten days later, the representatives

¹Chairman: Herbert Taylor, chartered accountant, coy. director, president, Melbourne Chamber of Commerce, 1944. Secretary: A.C. Leech.

²The representatives were: A.W.N.L.: Mesdames Couchman, Donaldson; U.A.O.: T.K. Maltby, C.F. Kean; Services and Citizens Party: W.B. Edwards, W.H. Anderson; Y.N.O.: F. Davis, F.M. Bradshaw.

³Notes of meeting, 5 June 1944 (I.P.A. file, 'Minutes of Unity Meetings 1944').

agreed to invite the participation of the Middle Class Party (after some hesitation owing to the view stated by one delegate present that there were said to be Communist elements in it), and Mrs Ivy Weber's Women for Canberra Movement.¹ Both organisations were to decline these invitations to take part in the unity discussions.

After this again somewhat ineffectual meeting, the discussions were suspended by agreement for three months while the organisations practised their ideal of unity and co-operated in opposing the Federal Powers referendum of August 1944. The referendum, which proposed to give the Commonwealth, for a period of five years after the war, 'general powers on a wide range of subjects covering industry, production and employment',² was seen by non-Labor activists as a stride towards socialism. The defeat of the referendum after a vigorous campaign by the anti-Labor organisations provided Menzies with an opportunity, which he seized, to initiate unity moves on a wider scale.

By the time the Victorian organisations convened their third meeting on 5 September, Menzies had already announced his intention of calling an inter-state conference of non-Labor organisations at Canberra in October. Nonetheless, the Victorian groups pressed on with their more limited objective of achieving unity within the state. To this end they drew up an ambitious agenda for a meeting planned for the following week. They proposed, first, to attempt to reach agreement on a common platform

¹Minutes of meeting, 15 June 1944 (ibid.).

²Fred Alexander, Australia Since Federation. A Narrative and Critical Analysis, Melbourne, 1967, p.164.

derived from the platforms of each of the participant organisations; secondly, to submit suggestions for a temporary central council of representatives from each organisation which would function until the new party had been formed; thirdly, to discuss names of prominent citizens considered to be suitable for the position of president of the new organisation, and fourthly, to consider a name for the party. Finally, it was agreed that if unity had not been achieved by 12 December 1944 the organisations would resume their 'former state and activities'.¹

The meeting on 12 September did not in fact deal with all of the matters on the agenda; much of the discussion was concerned instead with the forthcoming Canberra conference. The outcome of their talks was a unanimous resolution in which the participant organisations undertook to implement the decisions of the Canberra conference if it were successful, and to continue their negotiations for unity in Victoria if the conference failed. The text of the resolution and a summary of the objects and principles common to the Victorian organisations were communicated to Menzies.²

Caution was the prevailing note of the secret Victorian unity conferences. After four meetings the delegates had still not faced up to the concrete issues involved in a merger of their organisations, such as had helped to wreck the unity moves in N.S.W. Had the Canberra conference not terminated the discussions there is still the possibility

¹Notes of meeting, 5 September 1944 (I.P.A. file, 'Minutes of Unity Meetings 1944').

²Notes of meeting 12 September 1944 (ibid.); Herbert Taylor to R.G. Menzies, 6 October 1944 (ibid.).

that they might have broken down. Nonetheless, it cannot be said of Victoria, as it has been of N.S.W., that the organisations were 'warring among themselves only a few months before' the Canberra conference.¹ The only sign of intransigence by any of the organisations was the Y.N.O.'s decision, three weeks before the conference, to translate itself into the Nationalist Party and delete from its objectives all reference to co-operation with the U.A.O.² The only publicised reaction to this was Maltby's. On behalf of the U.A.O., he righteously expressed regret at what the Y.N.O. had done, on the ground that it had acted 'at a time when unity was essential'.³ This, however, hardly establishes that there was 'internecine warfare' among the Victorian groups.⁴ The Victorian meetings during 1944 had, in fact, drawn the state organisations together, thus effectively preparing the ground for the Canberra conference.

The problem of non-Labor political disunity largely involved N.S.W. and Victoria. Ten of the eighteen organisations represented at Canberra were located in these two states, seven of them in Victoria.⁵

¹Williams, Australian Quarterly, pp.20-21.

²Argus, 25 September 1944.

³Ibid., 26 September 1944.

⁴Williams, pp.14-15.

⁵Victorian organisations sending delegates were: U.A.O., Nationalist Party (formerly Y.N.O.), Services and Citizens Party, A.W.N.L.; observers attended from: I.P.A., Australian Constitutional League (Victoria), Kooyong Citizens' Association. The I.P.A., though invited to send delegates, chose to maintain its 'non-political' role by sending observers only. It offered, however, to assist with the expenses of any Victorian delegates and to provide secretarial assistance (G.J. Coles to Herbert Taylor, 12 September 1944 [I.P.A. file, 'Minutes of Unity Meetings 1944']7).

The success or failure of the conference thus rested on the responses of the N.S.W. and Victorian delegations. From what we have seen of the progress of the unity discussions in Victoria, resistance from this state was highly unlikely. Moreover Menzies had been kept informed of the progress of negotiations for party unity,¹ and before the Canberra conference he in turn consulted the I.P.A. concerning aspects of the proposed new party, including its 'name, organisation, finance, policy determination, and pre-selection of candidates'.² Menzies undoubtedly contributed much to the success of the conference and so to the formation of the Liberal Party. His performance there, long since embedded in Liberal Party mythology, was an example of superior political leadership and earned a spontaneous eulogy from the I.P.A.'s observers.³ But he was also able to exploit a situation which, because of the disposition towards unity among the leaders of the participant Victorian organisations, was more favourable than accounts of the formation of the Liberal Party, coloured by events in N.S.W., have suggested.

DISHING THE U.A.O. AND THE NATIONAL UNION

Generalising about the Liberal Party throughout Australia, L.F.

Crisp has written:

There was... a very considerable degree of continuity with the past in 1944-5, as regards not only party names but

¹Herbert Taylor to R.G. Menzies, 6 October 1944 (ibid.).

²Kemp, Institute of Public Affairs, p.14.

³I.P.A. Observers' Report on Canberra Conference (I.P.A. file, 'Secretary's Monthly Report').

accommodation, paid officials, membership and, of course, Federal and State Parliamentary Party membership.¹

How great was the continuity between the Liberal Party's organisation in Victoria and the existing non-Labor structures? It is true that the Liberal Party fell back on the personnel of the groups which had taken part in the Canberra conference. But it is least true with respect to the U.A.O.: none of its leading personnel transferred to the Liberal Party in 1945.² On the other hand, the party drew strongly from the remaining organisations. Thus W.H. Anderson of the Services and Citizens Party became the first president of the Victorian Division, and W.B. Edwards, a co-founder of the former, was elected to the State Executive. Also elected to the Executive were F. Davis, president of the Nationalist Party (Y.N.O.), Mrs C. Couchman, the president of the A.W.N.L., J.S. Cameron, a vice-president of the Kooyong Citizens' Association, and G. Jenkin, the president of the Australian Constitutional League (Victoria)³ and an observer at the Canberra conference.

One of the first actions of the Liberal Party's State Executive was to advertise for a general secretary and lease new office premises.

¹ Australian National Government, p.211.

² N.J. O'Brien, however, a vice-president of the U.A.O. who had attended one of the unity conferences and was also a delegate to the Canberra conference, took an active part in the formation of Liberal branches early in 1945, and was elected to the State Executive in 1946.

³ A 'non-party' organisation formed originally to gather funds for and help organise the campaign against the 1944 Federal Powers referendum. Its personnel were closely associated with the main interests supporting the non-Labor organisations. G.J. Jenkin was also a member of the Y.N.O. Executive in 1944.

The Executive also refused to accept a recommendation from the provisional executive (which had functioned until June 1945) that T.K. Maltby, M.L.A., the organising secretary of the U.A.O., be appointed to the staff.¹ Finally, on his return from overseas, the former secretary of the U.A.O., G.S. MacLean, declined an offer to accept an alternative position with the party at his previous salary.²

The National Union also was displaced from the party's structure and became merely a vestigial organ, listed in the telephone directory alongside of G.S. MacLean's address and number. Finance was henceforth channelled to the party from its supporting interests through a Finance Committee appointed by the Executive (thus fulfilling a condition demanded by Hollway in 1941). Through persons associated with the I.P.A., the ability of that body to attract financial donations from business interests was passed on to the Finance Committee of the Liberal Party. Thus, the party's first Finance Committee of seven persons included, as well as W.H. Anderson and J.S. Cameron from the party organisation, Herbert Taylor (the I.P.A.'s appointee as chairman of the unity conferences), and W.I. Potter and C.A.M. Derham, who were members of the Council of the I.P.A.³ — but absent were the figures publicly associated with the National Union, Sir Robert Knox and E.H. Willis.

Party and interest group were further brought together in the process of drawing up a platform for the Liberals. Such economic and

¹SE, 18 July 1945.

²Ibid., 15 January 1946.

³Ibid., 26 June, 28 August 1945.

social doctrines as full employment, a more positive role for government in the economy, the provision of social services and greater equality of opportunity were common to the thinking of the I.P.A. and the Liberal Party. At the Canberra conference, Menzies quoted a passage on the 'post-war functions of the state' from the then recently-published I.P.A. pamphlet Looking Forward,¹ and when the platform of the Victorian Division was being drawn up, Anderson and others frequently consulted C.D. Kemp, economic adviser to the I.P.A. Drafts of most sections of the platform were criticised by Kemp and a number of his amendments were included in the final version.² The platform of the Victorian Division, moreover, was later claimed to have been adopted 'substantially' by the Federal Executive as the platform of the Liberal Party of Australia.³

In Victoria, the organisational structure of the U.A.P., which for long had been discredited in the eyes of many parliamentarians and non-parliamentary members and supporters was dealt a coup de grace after the election debacle in 1943 by politically-active businessmen, who helped to replace it with another structure -- renamed, reorganised, under new management and designed to perform more effectively the non-Labor role of the U.A.P.

¹I.P.A. Observers' Report on Canberra Conference.

²See I.P.A. files, 'W.H. Anderson and Liberal Party'; 'Correspondence with W.H. Anderson'; 'Liberal Party, General and Miscellaneous correspondence'.

³W.H. Anderson to C.D. Kemp, 6 March 1946 (I.P.A. file, 'W.H. Anderson and Liberal Party').

STRUCTURE AND ACTIVITY

CHAPTER 4

PARTY STRUCTURE AND STATE POLITICS 1945-68 : AN OUTLINE

FORMAL STRUCTURE

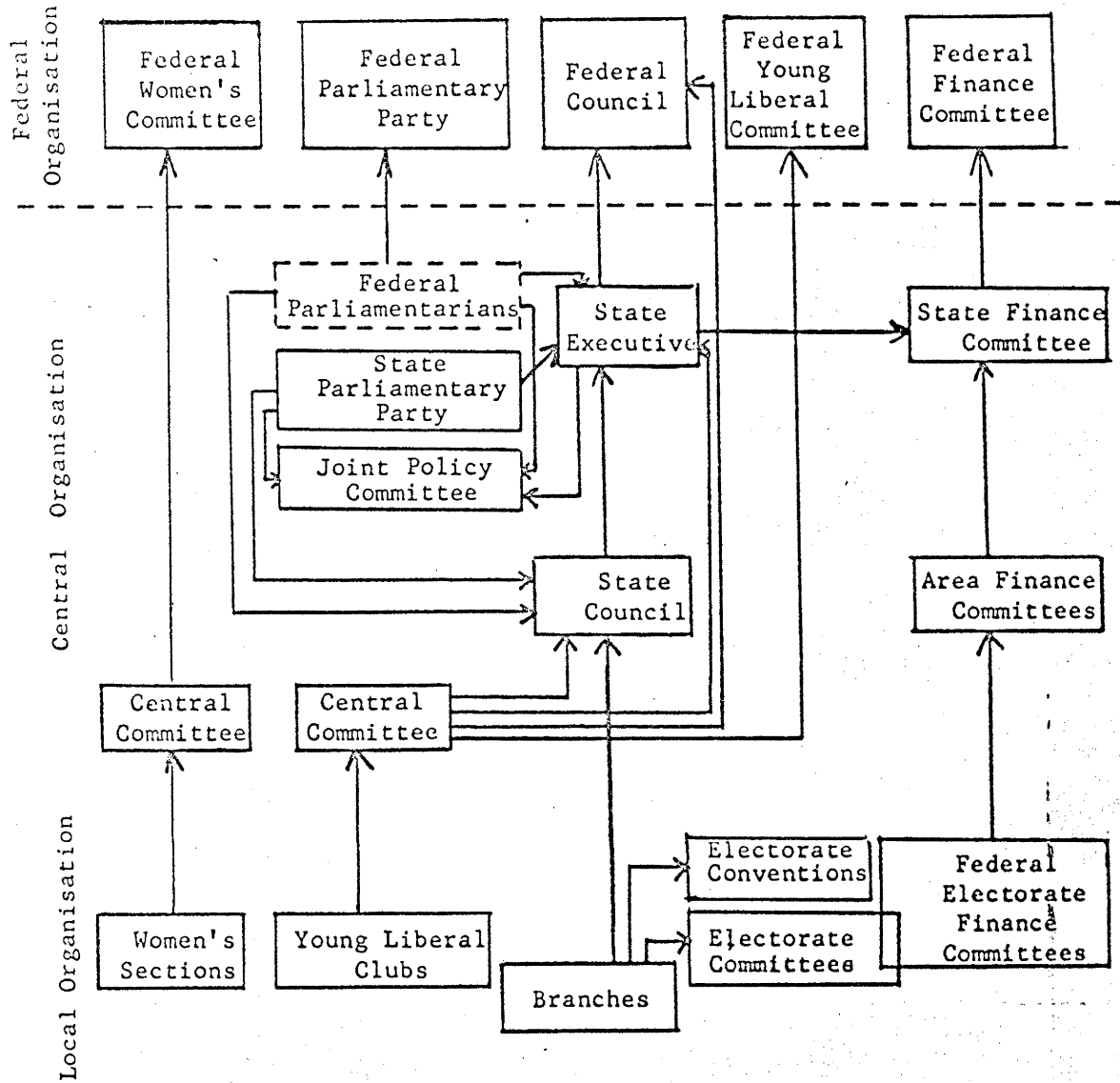
The term 'formal structure' refers to the party's constitutionally-defined units of organisation and their interrelationships as set out in Figure 4.1.

At first sight the party's organisational structure appears bewilderingly complex. More simply, however, it consists of a parliamentary and an extra-parliamentary section,¹ the latter having central and local 'levels' of organisation, and several affiliated or unaffiliated auxiliary bodies - namely the Young Liberal Movement, the Women's Section and the Liberal Speakers Group. The whole structure makes up one autonomous state Division of the Liberal Party of Australia.

The Liberal Party is a mass-membership party based on branches. From these are derived a number of functionally specialised structures for contesting elections (electorate committees), selecting parliamentary candidates (electorate conventions), administering finance (finance committees), and providing a governing hierarchy (State Council and State Executive). The parliamentary party is set apart from the rank-and-file organisation by its distinct role within the party and by the large amount of autonomy which the constitution accords it. The parliamentary party

¹Within the party the extra-parliamentary section is often referred to simply as 'the organisation' and this usage has sometimes been followed in the text below. In the Liberal federal constitution the word 'Organisation' is used synonymously with party.

FORMAL STRUCTURE OF THE LIBERAL PARTY



consists of endorsed party members who have been elected to either house of the state parliament, and 'such other members of the Party...as the State Parliamentary Party shall determine'.¹ Unendorsed party members may therefore be admitted to the parliamentary party, which has further control over its own membership through its power to suspend or expel members.² It elects its own leader, deputy leader (the two key roles in the party) and 'other officers', and governs itself 'according to its own rules'.³

Superficially there has been little change in the party's organisational structure since its formation. The main additions have been to its organs of finance and are discussed in Chapter 9. But it would be illusory to think of the organisation as static because its formal framework has remained basically unaltered. Within this framework the rules and procedures governing the composition and the functioning of the party's institutions are constantly under critical review, and at times significant changes have been made. The present State Executive, for example, although almost identical in composition to the original, now wields much wider constitutional powers. Similarly the role of the State Council has undergone noteworthy changes, and comparable observations could be made about other units of the organisation.

¹The Liberal Party of Australia (Victorian Division), Organisation Series, Constitution, February 1965.

²Ibid., Clause 41.

³Ibid., Clause 39.

These will be dealt with in the appropriate sections of later chapters. It need only be added that continual tinkering with the details of the constitution indicates that the Liberal Party (unlike the U.A.O.) possesses a relatively live organisation. Indeed, the enthusiasm of branches for suggesting changes to the constitution has had to be restrained by the ruling that such amendments will only be included on the agenda of the State Council every third year - unless by special permission of the Executive.

One major structural change -- the introduction of an 'area' level of organisation -- has been proposed on several occasions and is accepted in principle. In 1949, after the Liberal Party had absorbed elements of the Country Party, the first Council meeting of the newly-constituted Liberal and Country Party instructed the Executive to examine ways of decentralising its organisation.¹ Investigations were begun but had not proceeded far when they were interrupted by the more pressing demands of the federal elections in 1949 and the state general elections in May the following year.² In 1951, after the Council had prodded the Executive with the reminder that there was 'no election activity imminent',³ a detailed plan providing for five regional councils was tabled⁴ and a sub-committee was later appointed to investigate its implementation.⁵ But 1952 was a year of conflict within the party, and it also culminated

¹SC, 22 March 1949.

²SE, 13 April, 1 July 1949; SC, 3-4 August 1949.

³SC, 29-30 August 1951.

⁴SE, 28 March 1952.

⁵Ibid., 22 August 1952.

in the calling of early state elections; the area plan was again shelved.

The idea of an area level of organisation lay dormant until 1961, when interest in organisational change was stimulated by the general secretary's observation of the organisation of the British Conservative Party,¹ and by attempts within the Liberal Party to establish a more effective grass-roots financial structure.

In a refurbished plan tabled by the general secretary, the original five regions and regional councils were reduced to four. The councils were to comprise representatives from the branches, women's sections, and Young Liberal clubs within the area, plus state and federal parliamentarians in the electorates concerned. The councils would meet in February or March to consider motions from their constituent units. Successful resolutions were to be referred to the annual meeting of the party's State Council in July or August. An area committee and office bearers would supervise and work to promote the party's overall organisation in the area, maintaining a close liaison with the existing central organisation through the area chairmen, who would be ex officio members of the State Executive.²

¹After a visit to the United Kingdom, the general secretary produced a thirty-page 'Report on some aspects of the Conservative Party organisation'. On the basis of this he made certain recommendations for the Liberal Party, some of which were approved by the Executive (SE, 19 February 1960). Although the area system was not among his recommendations, he referred with approval in his report to the decentralisation of the Conservative Party's structure.

²Ibid., 3 November 1961.

Only a very limited version of the area organisation has been implemented in the form of two area finance committees¹ - a Metropolitan area committee operating from the party's headquarters in Melbourne, and a Western area office, with a permanent secretary, located at Camperdown in the Western District. The wider plan is again shelved. One of the main problems is to construct areas which 'hang together' and at the same time contain a sufficient number of electorates to justify functioning as a middle level of organisation between the electorates and the central bodies. Since approximately two-thirds of the thirty-three federal electorates are suburban or partly so,² the number of electorates remaining, out of which to construct a 'decentralised' organisation, is relatively few and the areas are at best rather cumbersome. The proposed Northern area, for example, was to comprise the federal electorates of Mallee, Murray, Bendigo and Indi. These extend the entire width of Victoria's northern boundary and many parts of them are at least as far from each other as from Melbourne. The practical advantages of the area in this case are somewhat obscure. Moreover, the extent to which party leaders are in favour of a system which would tend to develop a greater sense of autonomy within the local organisations of such federal electorates as Mallee, Murray and Gippsland is conjectural. These are the seats in which the Liberal Party has refrained from nominating candidates to oppose the sitting C.P. members³ - a matter on which some

¹See below, pp.259, 267-8.

²On the 1955-68 boundaries.

³Mallee was first contested in 1969.

local activists do not always see eye-to-eye with the State Executive. Finally, despite the merits of area councils in principle, there is strong support among branch representatives at the State Council for maintaining the existing procedure of two Council meetings each year, as against the alternative proposal of one area council and one State Council meeting.

The Victorian party is thus more centralised in its formal structure than its counterparts in the larger states, both N.S.W. and Queensland having area levels of organisation and Western Australia an equivalent divisional level.¹

CENTRAL OFFICE

An important component of the party's organisation is its core of paid staff, without whom it could not function as a co-ordinated body or at an equivalent scale of activity. The Liberal Party's staff is a dedicated band for whom political work is both a livelihood and a commitment to the party.

The secretariat occupies rooms on the ninth floor of a building in Queen Street, Melbourne. The Young Liberal Movement has its office one floor below. The Central Office,² as the party's headquarters are

¹For details, see Katharine West, Power in the Liberal Party: A Study in Australian Politics, Melbourne, 1965, pp.271-4. (Note that the Victorian area system has not functioned as it appeared it might at the time the book was written.)

²The term Central Office is taken from the British Conservative Party and was adopted after 1960. It is preferred to 'head office' or 'headquarters', since these convey an undesirable sense of 'direction from above'.

now officially known, is no show-place. Many activists in fact are inclined to share W.H. Anderson's view - that its location and decor leave an impression of the party as 'a back-room intangible',¹ and that it fails to project an image of the modern, efficient organisation which they would like to believe the party is -- or would like the public to believe. A small committee appointed by the State Executive to investigate the party's need for a new building listed as the main defects of the present premises their overcrowding, their lack of a 'proper meeting room' and club facilities, and, above all, the lack of 'prestige quality which Liberal Party premises ought to possess'.² Clearly, in non-Labor politics, style counts for a good deal. But until funds become more plentiful, the functions of the Central Office are bound to remain strictly practical and non-symbolic.

Nonetheless, in these austere surroundings the party employs a secretariat which is enviably large in the eyes of other Victorian parties.

¹ [W.H. Anderson], Report of the Chairman of the Organisation Review Sub-Committee to Federal Executive, May 1958, p.7. This section of the report argued the desirability of having 'good office premises which present an efficient business like appearance, and not only open to the public but forcing themselves on the attention of the public'. In Anderson's view, each state Division should have a headquarters which comprised an office building 'fronted literally by a shop window and well placed in a desirable part of each capital city where all may see as they pass by'. As well as office accommodation and a meetings room the headquarters should have a hall 'for party use and for lending for functions, particularly charitable shows', thus 'bringing people into Liberal Party premises and atmosphere'. The building should also have a book shop 'displaying Liberal thought literature', as a counter to the existence of 'left wing bookshops'.

² SE, 15 March 1968.

In 1967 it numbered seventeen: the general secretary and his assistant, the organising secretary of the Women's Section, a research officer and a news and information officer, the head of the field staff, a finance section consisting of an accountant and two collectors, and eight women clerical assistants.

Stability of office among the senior staff undoubtedly contributes to the smooth running of the party's extra-parliamentary organisation. The general secretary, J.V. McConnell,¹ joined the party in 1945, a few months after it was formed; the assistant secretary, A. Bateman,² took up his position in 1951. With a combined total of forty years service, they have the running of the organisation at their fingertips.

McConnell's role, however, is more than that of administrator. He has full speaking rights at meetings of the State Executive, and his counsel is sought by activists and parliamentarians alike on matters of organisational policy and practice, and on the planning and implementation of electoral strategies. His is an influential position.

Bateman on the other hand is primarily a party functionary involved in the necessary administration associated with a mass organisation. Periodic missives from the assistant secretary remind branches of their

¹Formerly an accountant with the firm of G.J. Coles; a member of the Young Nationalists in 1936; served in the A.I.F., 1940-August 1945; Eltham shire councillor and mayor, 1967-8; contested pre-selection for the blue-ribbon Liberal state seat of Malvern, 1953; nominated unsuccessfully for a vacant seat in the Senate, 1968.

²Former mayor of Essendon municipality; contested Essendon state seat in 1945; M.L.A. for Essendon, 1947-50; contested federal seat of Lalor, 1951.

constitutional rights and obligations in all phases of party activity and so help to maintain the very existence of the organisation.

FIELD STAFF

In addition to the secretariat, in 1967 the party employed fourteen field staff who were assigned to various federal electorates.¹ The party's long-term objective is an organiser in each electorate, but it is unlikely that this will ever be attained, for field staff are an expensive item.² The number of permanent organisers employed by the party therefore fluctuates according to the availability of finance; if this slumps some of the field staff must be dismissed, as in 1950 and again in 1960-61.

The activities of electorate organisers are co-ordinated by the head of field staff at the Central Office, to whom they are initially responsible. Ultimately, however, they are under the direction of the general secretary and hence the State Executive.

As far as possible, field staff live and work in one electorate, but they are liable to be deployed elsewhere, perhaps to assist with intensive canvassing during an important by-election, perhaps to take part in a membership drive in a suburban electorate to boost its finances and organisation, and sometimes to aid the election campaign in a neighbouring state.

¹Ballaarat, Bendigo, Bruce, Corangamite, Corio, Deakin, Flinders, Henty, Higinbotham, Lalor, Maribyrnong, McMillan, Wannon, Wimmera.

²In 1962, for example, the salary and expenses of the Corangamite electorate organiser were reported to be reaching £2,500 per year (letter, secretary of Corangamite electorate committee to Corangamite branches, 26 April 1962).

In compact suburban electorates there are no geographic factors inhibiting branch members from carrying out the equivalent activities of field staff. In country areas, however, where settlement is dispersed and electorates are large, full-time party workers are essential for the purpose of building up an effective electorate organisation. The task of the organiser is to 'sign up' new members, collect subscriptions, form and re-form branches where they are needed, attend branch meetings and keep in touch with their office bearers, meanwhile steering as best he can a path through the parochial and personal grievances that are the stuff of grass-roots politics. In this way professional party workers supplement the voluntary efforts of branch members to increase the party's resources of membership and money.

THE LIBERAL PARTY IN STATE POLITICS 1945 - 68¹

An unstable factor in many parties is the relationship between their politicians and their non-parliamentary activists. This has certainly been the case in the Victorian Division of the Liberal Party. As a result of the party's federal structure, however, its federal politicians are in some significant ways not as close to the Division's extra-parliamentary organisation as their state colleagues. A relationship has developed between the central organs of the extra-parliamentary wing and the state politicians which is different from that obtaining within the federal institutions. This reflects the fact that, although

¹The best study is in West, pp.3-48.

the Liberal Party in Victoria, as elsewhere, was formed primarily to meet non-Labor's needs in federal politics, political circumstances at the state level have been the more influential in the development and functioning of the party's non-parliamentary organisation. This is not to suggest that federal politics have an insignificant bearing on the party; rather it is to emphasise the importance for the party of, first, the close structural relationship that exists between state parliamentarians and their organisation, and, secondly, the peculiarities of Victorian state party politics since 1945. These include a period of turbulence and instability far greater than any experienced by the federal party. On the contrary, the outstanding fact of federal politics has been the Liberal Party's unbroken term of office since 1949, on the bases of a stable coalition with the Country Party and, until 1966, the dominating leadership of Sir Robert Menzies. Continuity and stability have been the keynotes of federal Liberal politics, and these qualities are not as conducive to organisational change as political turbulence. It is therefore chiefly against the background of the course of state politics that an analysis of the Victorian party's organisation must be set.

Party politics in Victoria since 1945 can be divided into two distinct phases. The first or Country Party period lasting from 1945 to 1952 was a continuation of a party situation which had emerged in the 1930s. This period is distinguished by the presence of an unusually vigorous Country Party playing a role in state politics that was not always compatible with the Labor - non-Labor alignment usually attributed

TABLE 4.1

VICTORIAN MINISTRIES 1943 -68

Date	Description
18 Sept. 1943 - 2 Oct. 1945	Dunstan-Hollway (Country-U.A.P.Coalition) ^a
2 Oct. 1945 - 21 Nov. 1945	Macfarlan (Liberal)
21 Nov. 1945 - 20 Nov. 1947	Cain (Labor)
20 Nov. 1947 - 3 Dec. 1948	Hollway-McDonald(Liberal-Country Coalition)
3 Dec. 1948 - 27 June 1950	Hollway (Liberal)
27 June 1950 - 28 Oct. 1952	McDonald (Country)
28 Oct. 1952 - 31 Oct. 1952	Hollway (<u>Liberal</u> Electoral Reform)
31 Oct. 1952 - 17 Dec. 1952	McDonald (Country)
17 Dec. 1952 - 31 March 1955	Cain (Labor)
31 March 1955 - 7 June 1955	Cain (Labor)
7 June 1955 - -	Bolte (Liberal)

^a U.A.P. = Liberal after March 1945.

Source: Hughes and Graham, A Handbook of Australian Government and Politics.

to the Australian party system. As a result, a characteristic of the period, as Table 4.1 shows, was the succession of unstable coalition or minority governments. Until 1952 the balance of party representation in the Legislative Assembly was such that inter-party manoeuvring and bargaining, not the attainment of majority party status, was the basis of holding governmental office.

Although the so-called Country Party period may be said to have ended in 1952, when John Cain formed a Labor ministry after his party won an absolute majority of seats, the character of the second phase of post-war Victorian party politics derives mainly from the years after 1955. This period is associated above all with continuous Liberal Party rule and with the presence of an unusually vigorous Democratic Labor Party (D.L.P.), playing a determined anti-Labor role.

The stable coalition achieved by the federal Liberal and Country parliamentary parties has never been matched in Victorian state politics. By contrast, between 1945 and 1952 the fluctuating relations between the two parties at state level were a major determinant of state politics and a constantly abrasive issue within their respective organisations.

In September 1945, before the Liberal Party was a year old, five of its state politicians, acting without the sanction of any other section of the party, voted to defeat the governing Country-Liberal coalition led by A.A. Dunstan. The subsequent Labor minority government was terminated two years later by the non-Labor resurgence coincident with the federal Labor government's bank nationalisation programme. At the state elections in November 1947, Labor's parliamentary numbers declined from thirty-one

to only seventeen. However, T.T. Hollway's Liberal-Country coalition was even more short-lived. In December 1948, when Hollway reconstructed his ministry to exclude Dunstan, the Country Party withdrew its support and assumed the role of Opposition.

Not all Country Party politicians concurred with this - especially at a time of heightened anti-Labor feeling. Early in 1949 six parliamentarians who favoured a merger with the Liberal Party rebelled. They and their local supporters were eagerly welcomed into the Liberal Party, which, to accommodate them and, hopefully, to engineer a more complete amalgamation of the non-Labor forces, reconstituted itself as the Liberal and Country Party with provision for equal representation of country and metropolitan members in the central institutions of its organisation. The heady year of 1949 was climaxed in the December federal elections by the defeat of the federal A.L.P. and Menzies' accession to the office of Prime Minister.

The Victorian Liberal Party's fortunes then took a sharp downward turn. The Division experienced its blackest years by far between 1950 and 1952: a rift developed in the state party, and there was a marked degree of disillusion among activists with the performance of the federal coalition. In 1952 the state president frankly admitted that: 'Anxiety and bewilderment have replaced the enthusiasm and high endeavour which once marked the L.C.P.'¹ In June 1950 an anti-Liberal alignment of the state Country and Labor parties emerged. As a result, a Country

¹Argus, 8 May 1952.

ministry, led by J.G.B. McDonald and supported by the Labor Party in return for certain policy concessions, replaced Hollway's Liberal government. Hollway replied by offering his party's temporary support for a Labor government, with the object of securing reform of the electoral boundaries and the method of electing the Legislative Council. He proposed a redistribution which provided for two State Assembly seats to every federal division - the 'two-for-one' plan - and the introduction of elections to the Legislative Council on the basis of a system of proportional representation and adult franchise. Hollway's object was to undermine the parliamentary strength of the C.P.

His tactic failed. The Labor Party rejected his proposal and, more importantly, his manoeuvres aroused serious opposition to his leadership among sections of the Liberal parliamentary party.¹ Although 'two-for-one' and reform of the upper house were adopted as party policy by the State Council in September 1950, they were never accepted as such by many parliamentary members.² Some, for fairly good reason, feared the effect of the proposed boundary changes on their continued hold on their parliamentary seats.³

The position of the Liberal Party in 1950 was in some respects comparable with that of the Country Party in 1948: in both parties there were members who leaned towards the idea of a Liberal-Country 'anti-socialist' alliance; in 1948, however, Dunstan's presence had been a

¹E.g., *Ibid.*, 22, 28 June 1950; 12, 18, 21 July 1950.

²West, pp.16-17.

³*Ibid.*, p.21.

stumbling block to closer relations between the parties; in 1950-51 many saw Hollway and his 'two-for-one' plan in this role.¹ The result of the mounting opposition to Hollway was that in December 1951 the parliamentary party elected L.G. Norman and H.E. Bolte to replace Hollway and T.D. Oldham as leader and deputy leader respectively. Following this, in 1952, the party (though not Hollway) officially abandoned the 'two-for-one' policy when the State Council, by the narrowest of margins, adopted an alternative scheme for redistribution, which was submitted to it by the new parliamentary leader.² In July the Liberal Party confirmed its détente with the Country Party: when Labor withdrew its support from McDonald's Country ministry, on the grounds that it had failed to introduce a suitable measure of electoral reform, the Liberal parliamentary party undertook conditionally to maintain McDonald in office.

Not so Hollway, who widened the rift in the Liberal Party by continuing to pursue a temporary pact with Labor in order to achieve the 'two-for-one' electoral reform. Having engaged in clandestine discussions with the Labor Party, he narrowly failed to secure McDonald's defeat in a no-confidence motion supported by Labor members and five Liberal followers in the Legislative Assembly. For this he was expelled from the parliamentary Liberal party, but continued to lead a dissident group of Electoral Reform Liberals. McDonald's defeat was finally engineered in the Legislative Council at the end of October, when two Hollway supporters in that house voted with Labor members to refuse supply. The ensuing

¹Argus, 2 February 1951.

²West, pp.21-2.

Electoral Reform ministry led by Hollway was in turn swiftly dealt with by the combined opposition of Country and 'loyal' Liberal parliamentarians.

At the state elections called in December to resolve the political impasse, Hollway's Electoral Reform League contested fifteen seats. Their most notable achievement was undoubtedly Hollway's own defeat of the Liberal leader, L.G. Norman, in the electorate of Glen Iris. Helped by the division in the Liberal Party's ranks, Labor's representation leapt from twenty to thirty-seven, thus allowing John Cain to establish a government on the basis of an absolute majority of seats. The official parliamentary Liberal Party by comparison was reduced to a mere eleven members, one fewer even than the Country Party.

Yet any chance of Labor's retaining its remarkably favourable position was wrecked by the crisis in its own organisation, which culminated in the party split in March 1955 and the formation of the rival Anti-Communist Labor Party, led by W.P. Barry. Labor's rule was cut short when in April members of the Anti-Communist group voted with the Opposition. At the elections in May, the condition of the Liberal and Labor parties was simply a reversal of that in 1952. So too was the outcome of the poll. Thus, in 1955, a reunified Liberal Party, having expelled the last of its Electoral Reform rebels two years before, overwhelmingly defeated a divided Labor Party. With the help of the preferences of the Anti-Communist Labor candidates, the Liberal Party's share of seats jumped from eleven to thirty-three. Labor's declined to twenty.

Bolte's first term as Premier began rather shakily, with Liberal members occupying exactly half the seats in the Legislative Assembly. In office, however, the party consolidated its electoral position in relation to a static Country Party, a discredited A.L.P. and a resolutely anti-Labor D.L.P. At all subsequent elections the Liberal Party has attained a clear majority of seats in the Assembly. In many respects, therefore, the 1955 state elections were a turning point in post-war Victorian party politics. Since 1955 the distribution of support for the parties has remained highly stable; for fifteen years marginality of seats has not been a significant factor in Victorian elections. During this period Sir Henry Bolte emerged as a strong leader who, notwithstanding the reservations that some members and electors have at times held concerning his political style and, less often, his judgement, has been able to rely in a way that Hollway could not on the loyalty of all sections of the party. Furthermore, although the presence of a hostile Country-A.L.P. combination in the Legislative Council has sometimes been a frustrating impediment to Liberal government, it has not raised to the same extent the complicated problems of political tactics nor the intra-party strains associated with the period between 1945 and 1952.

The contrasts in the political circumstances of the two periods in post-war Victorian politics are important from the perspective of the development and functioning of the party's organisation. In general it will be found in subsequent chapters that state politics up to 1952 were conducive to an increase in the disciplinary and policy-making powers of

the extra-parliamentary organisation vis-a-vis the state politicians.

In this period the Victorian Division developed most of its distinctive organisational features, modifying its original procedures when necessary and diverging markedly in certain of its aspects from the model for state Divisions as specified in the 'Menzian' federal constitution.

CHAPTER 5

MEMBERSHIP

FORMAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

Members as well as money are the bases of organisation in mass parties. The Liberal Party, therefore, maintains an open door to prospective members. To encourage people to join the party, the formal qualifications for membership are minimal and the process of joining is made as easy as possible. This membership is available to electors on the payment of \$1.00 a year subscription, provided that they do not belong to any organisation declared by the State Executive to be 'opposed to the best interests of the Party'.¹

This clause, however, does not explicitly prevent a Liberal member from belonging to another political party, or if that is the intention it is administered leniently. In country areas dual membership of both the Liberal and Country parties is not uncommon.² This in fact may simply mean that the persons concerned have paid a subscription to each, as in neither party does membership necessarily entail active participation. But the situation is even more blurred by the fact that, at federal

¹Constitution, 1965, Clause 9.

²Verbal information from several Liberal country branch secretaries. One case of dual membership cited was that of a garage proprietor in Colac who had joined both parties because his clients belonged to both. Note that dual membership is explicitly proscribed by the constitution of the C.P. which states: 'No member of any other political organisation is eligible to become or remain a member of the party' (Country Party (Victoria), Constitution and Rules, Clause 4).

elections in seats where the Country and Liberal parties do not oppose each other, members of the one are known to have assisted the candidate of the other on polling day. A case of dual membership which gained unusual publicity was that of M. Bourke, who, in 1968, when selected by the Liberal Party for the federal seat of Wimmera, revealed that he had been a financial member of the C.P. for nine years and a member of the Liberal Party for seven. He added, however, that on his selection by the Liberal Party he had cancelled his bank order to the C.P. -- which promptly expelled him.¹ Dual membership must be regarded as one of the political peculiarities of a rural and country town social environment. It suggests, moreover, that the hostility in Victoria between the Liberal and Country parties in state politics only becomes a reality within the party organisations among committed activists. Nominal members characteristically display a more lackadaisical attitude towards party conflict.

In addition to full membership, which confers the right to participate in all party activities, the Liberal Party's constitution provides for two further categories of membership: first, young people may become junior members from the age of sixteen years, and from eighteen years may be granted voting rights by their branches, except in matters relating to the selection and endorsement of candidates; secondly, migrants who have not qualified for enfranchisement may join as provisional members, a status which, however, carries no voting rights within the party.²

¹Age, 23 October 1968.

²Constitution, Clause 2A.

According to the constitution new members are formally accepted into the party by a resolution passed at a branch general or committee meeting.¹ But this is a formality which is rarely observed by branches or, at least, hardly ever recorded in their minute books. Upon joining the party a new member is not, as in the A.L.P., required to sign a pledge of loyalty to its policies and platform; the bond between the member and his party is thus purely informal, though not necessarily less emotionally compelling. The constitution, however, instructs members that it is their 'duty' to uphold the party's constitution and platform and to work for the return to parliament of its endorsed candidates.² But continued membership does not depend on the member's performing his 'duty'; nor, unlike his Labor counterpart in some states, does he forfeit some of his rights within the party by, for example, failing to attend a specified number of branch meetings. To retain his membership rights the Liberal member must only remain financial. Apart from requiring payment of an annual subscription, the party is entirely permissive about the role of the member in the organisation.

Members may be expelled or suspended by their branches, the State Executive or the State Council on grounds of 'disloyalty to the Party, its Constitution, or Platform or of conduct gravely detrimental to the best interest of the Party'.³ The machinery for expulsion and appeals against it extends through a page and a half of the constitution; but, except among members of parliament, cases of expulsion from the party are almost non-existent.

¹Ibid., Clause 2.

²Ibid., Clause 3.

³Ibid., Clause 10 (i).

The Liberal Party's non-parliamentary wing is conventionally regarded as having electoral rather than programmatic functions. It is consistent with this that electioneering offences, in particular that of campaigning against an endorsed party candidate,¹ have been the most frequent ground for expulsion. On the evidence available, branch members are rarely expelled for publicly criticising official party policy, mainly because most members who find themselves seriously in conflict with it either resign from the party with a flourish or quietly allow their membership to lapse. This has occurred most frequently among branch activists on three occasions: during the period of inflation and disillusion with the federal government in 1950-1, in 1959, as a result of the raising of salaries for federal parliamentarians, and over the question of capital punishment as it arose during the Ronald Ryan case between December 1966 and February 1967. Of more note, and indicative of the party's basic cohesion, no member of the State Executive has been expelled, although in 1961, after an attempt to expel him had failed, A.J. Missen was reprimanded for allegedly contravening Clauses 3 and 10 of the constitution by acting in a legal capacity for an unendorsed candidate.²

The minimal nature of the qualifications for entry into the party and the relaxed conditions for retaining membership fit Duverger's dictum for branch-based mass parties: such parties, he notes, while not despising quality of membership, regard quantity as 'the most important of

¹In 1962 expulsion for this offence was made automatic under Clause 86(ii).

²SE, 15 September 1961.

considerations'.¹

THE MEANING OF MEMBERSHIP

A political party's doctrines of membership spring from its view of its own role in the party system. The Liberal Party, following its non-Labor predecessors, has always asserted its claim to govern on the basis of its integrative role; the self-image of the Nationalist Party forty years ago is equally that of the latter-day Liberal Party: 'The essence of Nationalism is that it has no rewards to offer for a class. Its work is for the general good'.² The Liberal Party therefore claims that, unlike the A.L.P. and C.P., which are accused of being class or sectional parties, it is a genuine 'people's party',³ representing all sections of the community. Accordingly, membership is open to all, a large membership, whatever its 'quality' in terms of participation in the activities of the party, being regarded as an indication of the general healthiness of the party's organisation and of its wide acceptance by the electorate. This attitude, although in line with non-Labor tradition, is reinforced by the memory of the collapse of the U.A.P., which had allowed its rank-and-file membership to dwindle almost away.

¹Duverger, Political Parties, p.23.

²Argus, 24 September 1924.

³The term 'people's party' has been used by non-Labor on several occasions, notably in Victoria, 1910-17, where there was both a People's Party and a People's Liberal Party, and in Queensland, 1943-49, where there was the Queensland People's Party.

Certainly when party membership slumped after 1949 the official reaction was one of panic, with the Branch Development Committee of the State Executive calling for 'urgent action' to check 'the progressive decline and eventual eclipse' of the party.¹

While the party naturally prefers active members and is constantly critical of apathy, as we have seen, there are no sanctions in the form of loss of rights against members who never or only rarely take part in branch activities. Identification with the party is the most important fact of membership, while participation is of secondary importance.

The party's 'soft' approach towards membership has been criticised scathingly by W.H. Anderson who some years ago argued that the open-door principle of party membership should be abandoned by introducing a rule which explicitly disqualified members of other parties from joining the Liberals and, secondly, by increasing the minimum membership fee to at least £1. Anderson saw little of value in enrolling a large number of nominal members who showed no interest in party affairs. The party in his scheme would consist of a core of activists; membership he interpreted as meaning more than merely the expression of a psychological commitment to the party. Thus he wrote:

It is an error to seek unduly for numerical greatness of members. They are mostly uninterested - the product of a "half-crown" membership subscription. They do not promote progress - rather do they impede the work of the real Party "workers". Indeed it could be argued that small "cells" of say 10 members in most branch locations could be preferred to numerically stronger branches. The

¹SE, 30 November 1951.

"cells" would consist of hard-core, informed and addicted Liberals worth their salt, who could get on with the basic jobs. One such key member is worth a score of bloodless persons, empty of conviction, indolent and uninterested.

The Party is a political wing — with an objective and enemies. Each member must be 100% loyal... ¹

Membership and money are closely bound up in the concept of a mass party. The 'signing up' of members has an obvious value as a fund-raising procedure. At first sight, therefore, it is paradoxical that the Liberal Party, which draws more support than any other party from the well-to-do sections of the community, for twenty years should have charged by far the lowest membership fee of any party in the state. In Anderson's scornful terms again, one could be a Liberal member for 'a packet of cigarettes per annum'.²

Yet the paradox is not difficult to explain. While welcoming all the funds it could raise from its grass-roots organisation, the new party did not have to rely on them. Like its predecessors, it depended on large-scale financial donations, mainly from the business community; a mass membership was highly desirable for several reasons, but finance was one of the least of them. More important was the ideological significance of membership. In reaction to the oligarchical structure of the U.A.O., many activists, especially in the party's early years, were enthralled with the idea of creating a genuine mass party which all could join.

'Members are of more importance than money', one branch recorded firmly

¹Report of Organisation Review Sub-Committee, 1958, pp.21-2.

²Ibid., p.13.

in its minute book in 1945.¹ If the party was to be in reality the popular movement that it claimed to be, it was necessary that the amount of the fee should deter no-one from joining. On the other hand, as a branch president a few years later wrote in his annual report: 'We do feel we are entitled to expect financial support from those who are unable to give us their time'.²

There is, then, an inherent ambiguity in the Liberal Party's concept of membership. This stems from the fact that, while it desires to be a mass party, it has no need to be one -- as Anderson argued. The ideological and electoral functions of membership tend to pull in different directions. Are members to be valued for their own sake? Or are they to be regarded primarily as an instrument of the party's seeking office? Or both? Occasionally, therefore, Liberals may be found wondering whether their party should be more 'movement' and less 'machine' in its approach to members. The introduction into metropolitan electorates of the bank order method of paying membership fees sparked off several examples of such introspection.³ Some activists clearly felt that canvassing for bank orders put too much emphasis on the mere cash value of membership, was lacking in propriety, and compromised the notion of the party as a popular movement. Thus one branch expressed the fear that

¹Minutes of Deepdene branch, 4 September 1945 (original emphasis).

²Minutes of Kew branch, 24 March 1959.

³A bank order authorises the member's bank to pay annually to the Liberal Party a sum (not less than two dollars) nominated by him.

it would lose its 'individuality' and its 'personal touch' with members;¹ another agreed to implement the system but 'by discreet approaches to our existing members, in the first instance',² while the president of a third branch showed his preference for participant members, as against mere donors, when he reminded members that as they collected bank orders from people they should also encourage them to become active in the party. His branch confronted the ambiguous nature of membership in a practical way by agreeing to prepare two lists of names -- one of persons who might be 'interested in subscribing to the Party's funds through the Bank Order system', and the other of those who might be 'interested in becoming active members of the Party'.³

In 1968, when the State Council considered a resolution calling for an increase in the basic membership fee from fifty cents to two dollars, the well-worn 'ideological' arguments opposing such a change were again heard. How many members of the Council, asked the first opponent of higher fees, had canvassed from door to door to enrol members? In her view the party's electoral success was due to its securing the votes of 'ordinary people' and enabling them to join the party made them more loyal to it. A second speaker asserted (like the branch cited earlier) that it was 'better to have members than cash' and raising the fee would inevitably deter some from joining the party. The latter view was repeated by a third opponent of higher fees who added that the party

¹Minutes of North Camberwell branch, 2 June 1960.

²Minutes of Kew North branch, 31 August 1962.

³Minutes of Kew North East branch, 13 July 1962.

should aim to 'get members in before stinging them for two dollars'.¹

These sentiments hark back to the party's original organisational doctrines. They have lost much of their potency however in the eyes of a younger and more hard-headed generation of activists. Since about 1958 the trend has been clearly towards utilising the party's grass-roots organisation as a more effective source of finance. Few people now really believe that 'members are more important than money', and not uncommonly branches refer to organising a 'drive for bank orders' (not members). The concept of the party as a popular movement has waned; activists today are more efficiency-minded. It is significant in this respect that among the arguments raised at the State Council in support of a higher membership fee was the contention that it would 'add dignity to membership' and that the party must attract persons 'who consider it important to join'.² One should not attach too much importance to things said at the State Council, but there is an echo here of W.H. Anderson's preference for restricted, responsible and quality membership.³ It is tempting to interpret the shift in the perceived function of mass membership to be a result of the party's greatly changed electoral situation since the 1940s. After nineteen years of continuous federal Liberal-C.P. government and thirteen years in office at state level, the party has become less a popular movement for attracting electors and more an efficient machine for perpetuating these regimes.

¹Verbatim notes of State Council, 28-9 February 1968.

²Ibid.

³Report of Organisation Review Sub-Committee, p.13, pp.21-2.

On the basis of their participation in the activities of the branches to which they belong, party members may be divided into two groups - nominal members and activists. This is a familiar division in the literature on political parties. Nominal members, who account for at least 80 per cent of all persons joining the party, take no part at all in their branches' activities. Activists on the other hand are the office holders and committee members of the various branches. Like Duverger's 'militants' they are the

small circle of members...who regularly attend meetings, share in the spreading of the party's slogans, help to organise its propaganda and prepare its electoral campaigns.¹

Much of the flavour of political activity at branch level derives from this two-fold pattern of membership. Branch minutes continually record the disappointments and frustrations experienced by activists confronted with an apathetic membership. Thus, one branch may be found bewailing the fact that, although it had 186 members, the average attendance at its two general meetings in the preceding year had been only seven;² while another branch, in a strong Liberal electorate, expressed disappointment that after sending circulars to 600 people its inaugural meeting was attended by only fourteen.³ We shall return to this point in the next chapter when considering the structure of the party's branches.

¹Duverger, p.110.

²Minutes of Camperdown branch, 23 February 1961.

³Minutes of Studley Park branch, 17 August 1950.

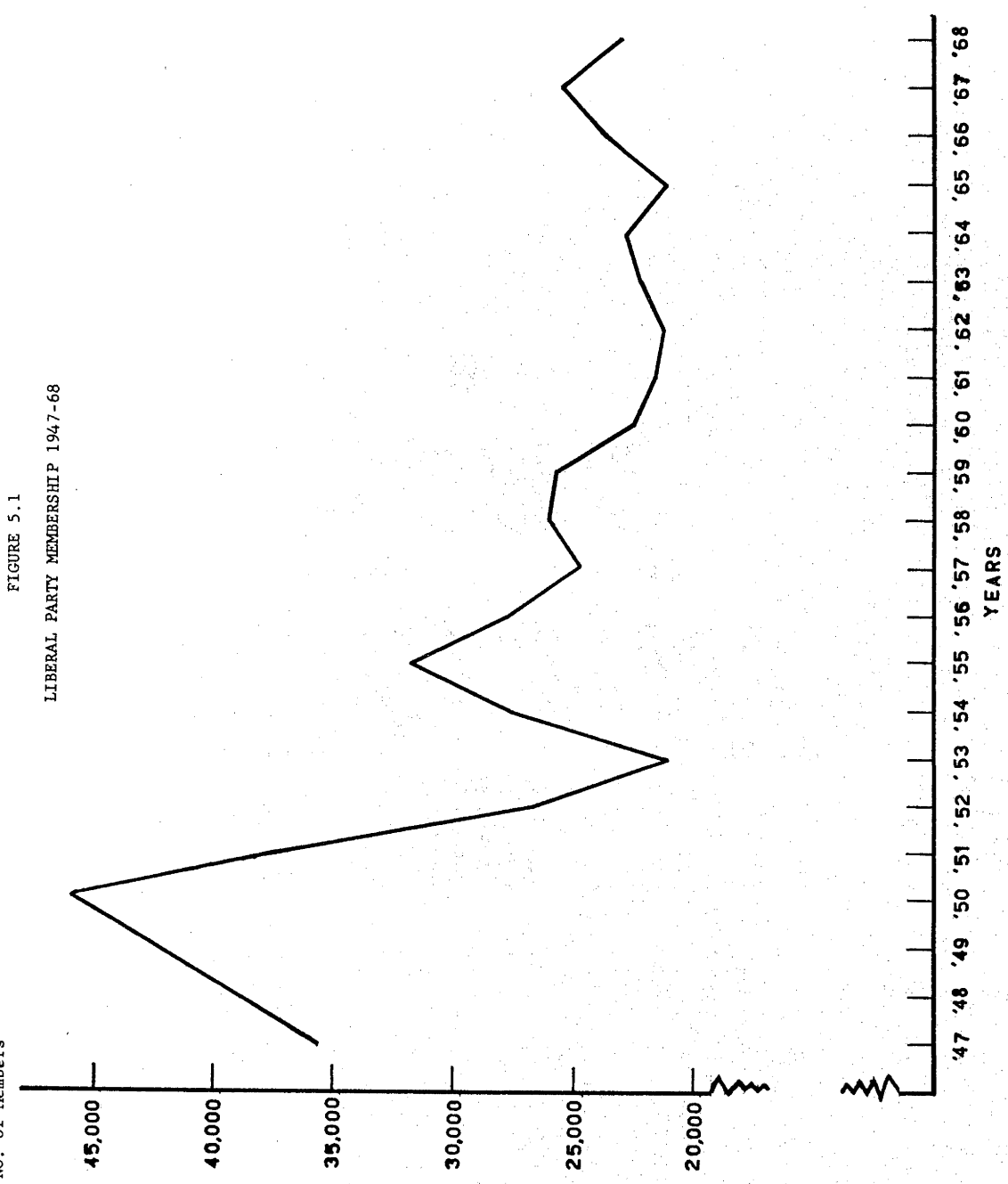
TRENDS IN MEMBERSHIP SINCE 1945

Many factors affect the size of a party's membership. Broad limits are set by the general community attitude towards joining parties. Another major determinant is the function of membership for a party - the extent to which on the basis of its organisational doctrines it seeks a mass membership or a cadre of activists - and connected with this the formal qualifications it lays down as conditions of membership. Relevant also are such factors as the methods employed to recruit members, the size of the party's professional staff, the electoral popularity of the party and the competition it faces from other parties in recruiting members.

Figure 5.1 shows the variation in the Liberal Party's membership caused by such factors since 1947. The dominant trends are clear: a rise in membership to a peak in 1950, a catastrophic decline between 1950 and 1953, a partial recovery by 1955, followed by a period of fluctuating membership with a greater tendency towards stability of numbers since 1957. These trends will now be examined more closely in relation to political events and organisational activity.

The period from 1945 to 1949 was one of intense organising activity. This was associated initially with the canvassing for members and the creation of branches immediately after the formation of the party and in preparation for the federal elections in September 1946. Although the tempo of organisational activity began to slow down after the elections it was soon stimulated by the reaction of the non-Labor forces to

No. of Members



Source: 1947-49, Minutes of State Executive; 1950-68, data supplied by Central Office.

the federal Labor government's policy of bank nationalisation. Organising activity was thus intensified during 1948 and 1949; the Liberal Party's own efforts were reinforced by the campaign waged by the private banks -- and vice versa.¹ Money flowed to the Liberal Party which, according to one source, raised £150,000 in two years.² Additional field staff were employed,³ and the party was able to expand its organisation into areas not hitherto attempted.⁴ In 1949 the party's country membership was further boosted by a split in the Victorian Country Party in which six parliamentarians and some of their local followers crossed to the Liberal Party. According to one branch, as a result of this split, 8,000 former C.P. members joined the Liberal Party -- though one suspects that this is an exaggeration.⁵ Nevertheless, in a euphoric mood, the State Executive directed its Branch Development Committee to organise a membership drive with the object of raising the party's membership to 100,000,⁶ and in September 1949 it was claimed that the number of country members had doubled in the last year.⁷

¹See A.L. May, The Battle for the Banks, Sydney, 1968, Chapters 3 and 8.

²Minutes of General Meeting of Liberal Speakers Group, 18 March 1963.
See also, SE, 30 November 1951.

³Forty-eight field organisers were reported in 1949 (SE, 28 October 1949). Even allowing for the employment of temporary staff prior to the general elections, this number is greatly in excess of the fourteen employed in 1967.

⁴Ibid., 29 October 1948.

⁵Minutes of Colac branch, 31 March 1949.

⁶SE, 23 March 1949.

⁷Ibid., 23 September 1949.

But the euphoria soon vanished in the face of a sharp decline in financial membership throughout the state. In 1950-51, the number of members in the metropolitan area slumped by 40 per cent to just over 19,000, while country membership declined by 18 per cent to 15,000.¹ This trend continued into 1953. The circumstances which had caused the remarkable increase in enrolments between 1947 and the end of 1949 were no longer present. Once the immediate threat of Labor's 'socialist' policies had been removed by the formation of the Liberal-C.P. government, the flow of money from non-Labor interests to the Liberal Party was reduced to a relative trickle. By the end of 1950 the party's financial position was reported to be critical.² It could no longer afford to employ its large staff of field organisers, who had spent most of their time canvassing for members. The result was tens of thousands of lapsed membership subscriptions.

Moreover, the climate of public opinion not only turned against the successful canvassing for subscriptions, but was more likely to induce a loss of membership. As a result of price inflation (despite Menzies' election promise in 1949 to put value back in the pound) and the 'horror budget' of 1951, the public opinion polls in 1952 and the early months of 1953 recorded the deepest slump in the popularity of the federal government before or since.³ This marked decline in the potential electoral

¹Ibid., 30 November 1951.

²Ibid., 10 November 1950.

³Percentage Support for Liberal and Country Parties 1951-4^a

1951			1952			1953			1954		
Fe.	Ap.	Au.	Fe.	My.	Oc.	Fe.	Jn.	Se.	Fe.	My.	Se.
51	52	49	47	43	40	39	45	48	47	48	52

(cont.)

support for the party at least suggests a corresponding shrinkage in its potential membership, since joining a party implies a stronger commitment to it than merely intending to vote for it. A loss of popularity is also detrimental to the morale of members; branch activists become more reluctant to engage in door-knocking activity. Thus, under comparable circumstances in 1959, one large suburban branch decided unanimously that the mood of the public called for discretion and temporarily suspended its door-to-door activities. Its secretary recorded that:

in view of the nature of the public reaction to the Richardson Report, and to the subsequent Federal Government's budget, the committee considers it inadvisable to proceed with further collections of Branch subscriptions for the year 1959-60.¹

On top of these factors, the morale of Victorian members and the effectiveness of the party's organising activity were further reduced between 1950 and 1952 by the prolonged and debilitating internal conflict over the issue of electoral reform and Hollway's leadership. The dispute was marked, as we saw in the previous chapter, by L.G. Norman's replacement of Hollway as parliamentary leader, in December 1951.

Avowedly to stimulate branch activity and 'revive the Party spirit',² the new leader and his deputy, H.E. Bolte, joined other party

^aAfter allocation of 'undecided' respondents according to their party vote in the previous federal elections.

Source: Australian Public Opinion Polls, Melbourne.

¹Minutes of Deepdene branch, 23 October 1959.

²SE, 8 February 1952.

members in a series of 'crusade meetings' throughout the state.¹ In addition, to help restore the confidence of the party's main donors of finance and give a fillip to its funds, meetings of businessmen were arranged, several of which were addressed by the Prime Minister, R.G. Menzies. The appointment of seven field organisers towards the end of 1952 was evidence that the party's finances were recovering. Important also for the revival of the party's organisation was the fact that general economic conditions were improving during 1953. As the economy recovered, so too did the party's public opinion ratings. By 1954 new members were being enrolled at a sufficient rate to reverse the downward trend of membership, which had been experienced during the preceding three years. But the recovery was not total and the branch structure had suffered irreparably as a result of the organisational retrenchment after 1950. Early in 1954, forty-one branches were declared by the Executive to be defunct, most being in small country centres or working-class suburbs.²

Since 1957, membership has fluctuated significantly less than during the preceding decade. This greater evenness is associated in part with the generally stable state and federal political conditions. A more specific contributing factor, however, is the effect of the introduction into metropolitan electorates of the bank order method of paying membership fees. By the signing of a bank order a person's subscription (and

¹Another motive for their 'crusade', however, was to elicit support for an alternative plan for electoral reform to the 'two-for-one' scheme proposed by Hollway.

²Ibid., 19 March 1954.

so membership of the party) is renewed automatically each year, unless the order is cancelled. The effect of this is to stabilise membership, for people rarely cancel their bank orders. In any recorded decline in party membership, the rate of loss among those subscribing through bank orders is disproportionately low. Thus, of a decline in total membership of 2,580 between 1967 and 1968, only 341 or 13 per cent were bank order subscribers.¹ This is simply the reverse of the situation in which very few nominal members bother to renew their fees and so allow their membership to lapse. Under the bank order system the apathy of most members is turned to the advantage of the party.

Bank orders had been common in the country electorates since the formation of the party. This is one reason why the rate of decline of membership in country areas in 1950-51 was less than half that in the metropolitan electorates.² The introduction of bank orders into the city areas was investigated in 1951 as a possible solution to the problem of maintaining membership at a more stable level.³ But it was not until after 1960 that the party began to push the system in metropolitan electorates and that bank orders were signed by more than a sprinkling of city members.⁴ By 1964, 35 per cent of metropolitan members were subscribing to the party through bank orders⁵ and the proportion was in-

¹Ibid., 12 July 1968.

²See above, p.125.

³SE, 30 November 1951.

⁴In 1954, for example, a list of eighty-five new members of one suburban branch contained only ten bank orders covering the subscriptions of twelve people (Minutes of Burwood branch, 8 December 1954).

⁵President's Report to State Council, 26 February 1964.

creasing. By 1968 over 18,000 of the party's 23,000 members subscribed by this method.¹

THE DISTRIBUTION OF MEMBERS

Parties recruit members most freely from among the sections of the community most likely to vote for them. But any tidy correlation between a party's membership and its voters is more likely than not to be distorted by the effect of an unequal distribution of organised recruitment of members. Very few people join mass parties on their own initiative; the majority of members must be sought out and enrolled by the party. Organising activity in turn reflects both the party's resources of finance and staff and the priority it places on the contesting of different electorates. Thus the distribution of members, like the size of party membership, is affected by political, organisational and demographic factors as well as the socio-economic and other considerations underlying the party preferences of electors.

Table 5.1 sets out in detail the electoral distribution of Liberal Party membership compared with Liberal voting. It shows that there is a rough correspondence between the two, the metropolitan electorates with the highest Liberal percentage vote also tending to have the most Liberal members. But the comparative rank orders of the electorates according to Liberal vote and party membership often differ considerably, as indicated

¹SE, 12 July 1968.

TABLE 5.1
LIBERAL VOTING AND LIBERAL MEMBERSHIP IN FEDERAL ELECTORATES 1966^a

Electorate ^b	No. of Electors (000s)	No. of 1st Preference votes (000s)	Membership	Ratio of Members to Liberal Voters	Liberal Percentage of 1st Preference Vote ^c	Difference in Rank Order of Column B to C
	A	B				
Higgins	41	24	740	1:32	63.2	-14
Kooyong	50	29	898	1:32	61.1	-13
Chisholm	41	22	1,522	1:15	58.4	- 2
Fawkner	37	18	782	1:23	55.3	- 5
Balaclava	43	21	508	1:41	54.0	-13
Isaacs	39	18	891	1:21	53.9	- 1
+ Wannon	45	23	1,657	1:14	53.3	+ 3
Bruce	119	58	1,189	1:49	52.9	-13
Higinbotham	64	30	989	1:31	51.3	- 4
+ McMillan	49	23	733	1:31	50.4	- 3
+ Ballarat	46	21	1,066	1:20	49.4*	+ 5
Deakin	84	39	1,198	1:29	49.3*	+ 1
Henty	50	23	516	1:45	49.8*	- 7
Flinders	69	32	1,073	1:29	49.3*	+ 3
La Trobe	87	38	904	1:42	47.6*	- 4
+ Corangamite	49	22	2,478	1:9	47.5*	+14
Corio	54	22	879	1:25	45.3*	+ 7
Maribyrnong	46	18	351	1:40	42.4*	+ 1
+ Bendigo	47	16	752	1:21	35.7(L)	+12
Yarra	33	9	117	1:80	31.9(L)	- 5
Wills	38	11	no data	-	31.1(L)	-
Darebin	55	15	no data	-	30.4(L)	-
Lalor	113	29	539	1:54	29.8*	+ 1
Melbourne	31	8	113	1:67	27.9(L)	0
Scullin	31	7	no data	-	27.1(L)	-
Batman	42	10	169	1:61	26.8(Ind. L.)	+ 3
+ Wimmera	40	10	2,085	1:5	26.4(C)	+26
Melbourne Ports	32	7	23	1:309	24.7(L)	+ 2
Gellibrand	40	9	no data	-	24.4(L)	-
+ Indi	46	7	566	1:12	15.2(C)	+27
+ Gippsland	48	-	103	-	uncontested	-
+ Mallee	41	-	422	-	"	-
+ Murray	50	-	140	-	"	-

^a Electorates ranked according to percentage of first preference vote won by the Liberal Party.

^b + indicates rural and country-town electorates.

^c* = won by Liberal Party on second preferences

(L) = won by Labor Party

(C) = won by Country Party

Source: Membership figures from Minutes of State Executive, 1 April 1966.

in the last column.¹ This difference is some measure of the effect on the level of membership of other variables besides the voters' party preference.

Membership is disproportionately low in Labor-held electorates.² This fact is more striking if we consider that in these electorates taken together there were 76,854 Liberal voters in 1966, but only 422 party members.³ The party, in fact, sees little value in maintaining a scattering of branches in the blue-ribbon Labor electorates. They are virtually unwinnable seats and the Liberal Senate vote is adequately kept 'alive' by the party's action in regularly contesting them in the elections for the state and federal lower houses. Besides serving little or no useful electoral purpose, branches in industrial electorates are difficult to maintain and continually need reviving. In the words of a former president of one such branch, they are 'only of nuisance value from a Party point of view'.⁴ When a sub-committee of the Speakers Group castigated the State Executive for neglecting to form branches in the

¹ Applying Spearman's formula for rank order correlation confirms that there is in fact no significant correlation between the two. For metropolitan electorates the correlation is .06, and for all electorates it is - .05.

² 'No data' on the table indicates that there are no branches in the electorate. Conceivably a few members living in these electorates have joined branches in other electorates, as they are entitled to do. Lalor, it should be noted, was won by the Liberal Party for the first time in 1966 and until then had been considered a safe Labor seat. The result was a surprise to both parties - and was reversed in 1969.

³ Ibid., 1 April 1966.

⁴ Letter to writer, 7 August 1967.

industrial electorates and for not adequately attending to them when they were formed,¹ the Executive bluntly replied:

To develop and maintain branches on a permanent basis in these areas needs a full time organiser... At the present time other areas are of more importance to the Party.²

A more striking feature of the distribution of membership than the relative lack of members in the A.L.P.'s strongholds is the imbalance between country and metropolitan electorates. Although the ten country federal electorates³ together included only 27 per cent of the state's enrolled voters in 1966, they accounted for 42 per cent of the Liberal Party's members in the year 1965-6. The four country electorates of Ballaarat, Corangamite, Wannon and Wimmera contained nearly one-third (31 per cent) of the party's membership. Moreover, the imbalance between country and metropolitan membership would have been even greater had organising activity in the three electorates of Gippsland, Mallee and Murray not been suppressed out of deference to the Liberal-C.P. federal coalition. Of these three electorates, Gippsland and Murray have never been contested, and Mallee was contested for the first time only in 1969. Even so, in 1966 there were as many Liberal members in Mallee alone as in the eight metropolitan Labor-held federal electorates.⁴ The reason

¹Liberal Speakers Group, "Where is the Party Heading?" A Survey of its Weaknesses and Some Proposed Remedies, [1965]. (Hereafter cited as Liberal Speakers Group, Survey of Organisation.)

²SE, 9 July 1965.

³Ballaarat, Bendigo, Corangamite, Gippsland, Indi, McMillan, Mallee, Murray, Wannon, Wimmera. There were thirty-three federal electorates in the state.

⁴Includes Batman (Independent Labor).

for this is that the party's branch organisation in the three C.P. 'satrapies' is not ignored to the same extent as in industrial electorates. Some effort is made to maintain a branch structure in the former to enable the effective contesting of state elections. Secondly, the federal C.P. strongholds, unlike the industrial electorates, are not regarded as unwinnable in the long term.¹ In other country electorates electoral rivalry with the C.P. has acted as a stimulant to the Liberal Party's organising activity. For this reason, and because the dispersed population of country electorates makes it difficult for branches to conduct their own membership drives, these seats are accorded first priority in the allocation of field staff. As a result their memberships are among the highest in the state, with Corangamite, Wimmera and Wannon in fact occupying the three top places.² As this patently indicates, the party's scale of electoral priorities and hence its recruitment activities are more significant as determinants of actual membership than the level of its vote.

Comparing the pattern of party membership in the N.S.W. and Victorian Divisions, it is apparent that in N.S.W. there is not such a disproportionately large membership in the country electorates relative to the metropolitan region. In N.S.W. Katharine Holgate (West) found

¹SE, 20 November 1964.

²The extent of the discrepancy between country and suburban electorates is more apparent when we adjust for the generally smaller enrolment in country seats. Thus, excluding the three electorates rarely contested by the Liberal Party, the ratio of Liberal Party members to electors in the remaining seven non-metropolitan seats is 1:35; for the first seven metropolitan electorates (on the basis of membership) the ratio is 1:66.

that in the twenty-two 'metropolitan' federal electorates in which the party was organised there were 46 per cent of the state's enrolled voters in 1961, and yet 65 per cent of the party membership in 1960.¹ In Victoria, by comparison, the twenty-three metropolitan federal electorates accounted for 73 per cent of the voters and only 58 per cent of party members. In N.S.W. the electorates with the three highest membership totals were in Sydney;² in Victoria they are in the country. Among other factors, the variance between the Divisions reflects their different electoral priorities in differing state party systems. In Victoria the Liberal Party, to a greater extent than in N.S.W., has developed its country organisation in order to counter the unusually strong and hostile C.P. in state politics.³

MAINTAINING A MASS MEMBERSHIP

Political parties structure the Australian electorate to a high degree: nearly all voters claim to identify 'generally' with one or another of the four main parties, and a great majority of them display a stable party allegiance during their voting lives.⁴ Even so the

¹Katharine Holgate, *The Structure of Liberal State Politics in N.S.W.*, M.A. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1962, pp. lxxiii-lxxlv. There were forty-six electorates in the state.

²Ibid.

³See below, pp. 349-59.

⁴Based on replies given by respondents in a sample of 2054 Australian voters randomly selected in eighty federal divisions. The sample is described in Michael Kahan and Don Aitkin, Drawing a Sample of the Australian Electorate, Occasional Paper No.3, Department of Political Science, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National

parties operate in a cultural milieu which sets severe constraints on the development of mass-membership organisations. Most electors are not very interested in politics. In a recent survey of political attitudes nearly half (44 per cent) of the respondents indicated that generally they had 'not much' or 'no' interest in political affairs, while only 17 per cent claimed to have a 'good deal' of interest.¹ It is not surprising then that joining a party is not one of the norms of Australian political life and that less than 6 per cent of electors are members of any party.² In Victoria in 1966 only one elector in approximately seventy-three or one Liberal voter in about twenty-six was a member of the Liberal Party.

The party has had to work hard to get and to keep its mass membership. The signing up of new members and the re-enrolling of old ones is a never-ending activity, for there is a constant erosion of party membership, mainly as a result of nominal or 'cash members' regularly neglecting to renew their subscriptions.³ Especially before the increase in the

University, Canberra, 1968, and a first report on the substantive concerns of the survey is in course of preparation. The survey is referred to hereafter as the Australian Survey Project.

87 per cent of the respondents in the sample indicated one or another of the parties in reply to the question: 'Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as Liberal, Labor, Country Party or D.L.P.?' 65 per cent stated that they had always voted for the same party.

¹Ibid. See also Paul R. Wilson and J.S. Western, 'Participation in Politics: A Preliminary Analysis', Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology, Vol.5, No.2, October 1969, pp.98-110.

²Australian Survey Project.

³Data on the stability of membership within individual branches is scarce. The following is an analysis of one branch's membership from 1949/50 to 1959/60:

(cont.)

number of 'bank-order members' in the metropolitan area, the annual collection of subscriptions was an important though often burdensome aspect of branch activity. Even one of the largest and most active suburban branches was to be found complaining of the amount of time and effort involved in calling on 'about 90 per cent' of its members to collect their dues. It was able to add, however, that 'this arduous work was carried out entirely by the Ladies' Committee'.¹ Another branch reported a decrease in membership each year between 1955 and 1959, 'owing to the inability of the executive members to pay personal calls on members who had omitted to forward their annual subscriptions'.² The

1. Number with 11 years continuous membership 1949/50-59/60	26
2. Number with discontinuous membership spread over 11 years 1949/50-59/60 (i.e. enrolled 1949/50 but not all years in between)	23
3. Number whose membership whether continuous or not was terminated on or before 1959/60	
(a) no reason given	27
(b) 'resigned'	16
(c) 'left district'	27
(d) 'deceased'	13
(e) transferred to specified branch	<u>2</u>
	85
4. Number enrolled after 1949/50 and whose membership had not been definitely terminated	<u>23</u>
Total	<u>157</u>

Combining categories 1, 2, 3d, 3e, 4 we can say that 55 per cent of the total membership over 11 years showed a stable affiliation with the party. Some who left the district may also have joined a different branch of the party. (Compiled from membership lists in minute book of Kew North branch.)

¹Minutes of Deepdene branch, 15 October 1947.

²Minutes of Greensborough branch, 27 April 1955; 12 March 1956; 26 April 1957; 16 April 1958; 8 May 1959.

circulars and membership forms which this branch had sent through the post were no alternative to a personal approach. But even the latter method runs into difficulties. We can sympathise for example with the committee member of a branch who, at one meeting, reported that progress in enrolling members in his area was 'slow', and at the next meeting stated that:

It had been decided to temporarily discontinue canvassing until the weather became a little warmer... [For] a person dragged from a fire on a cold night is not in the best humour to receive information.¹

Door to door canvassing for subscriptions is not a popular activity among committee members. It is common therefore for branches to try to lessen the task by such means as asking Central Office for the temporary help of an organiser, approaching a Young Liberal club in the area for assistance on a commission basis or, in the case of some large branches, by temporarily employing a collector. This has sometimes been an expensive practice. The Branch Development Committee of the State Executive once estimated the cost to the party of paid collectors as 'up to 20 per cent' of all fees and donations.² But this may well have been a conservative calculation, for it was noted by one branch that their paid collector had gathered subscriptions to the value of £38.12.0. at a cost to the branch of £35.8.0.³ Apart from the dubious economics of the method, some members see another, more ideological, objection to the

¹Minutes of Deepdene branch, 8 June, 13 July 1945.

²SE, 30 November 1951.

³Minutes of Deepdene branch, 16 October 1953. See also, Minutes of Canterbury branch, 18 March 1958.

temporary employment of paid collectors. They believe that it is not conducive to good proselytizing and that it is desirable for canvassing to be carried out by 'well trained Party Organisers expounding Liberal principles and by that means gathering in new members'.¹ Another technique employed by some branches as an alternative to making a complete canvass of their territories is that of selective recruitment in which the branches compile lists of prospective members, based on the recommendations of their committee members.² In strong Liberal electorates, however, door to door canvassing for subscriptions can produce remarkable results. Thus, in one street alone in an upper-middle-class suburb, a woman organiser enrolled (or re-enrolled) members at numbers 3, 4, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 22, 26, 27, 28, 32, 34, 36, 38, 42, 44, 46. From these nineteen households the party gained thirty-five members.³ But it is from such inflated membership lists as this that cash members are likely to drop away in large numbers -- if the branch allows them to. As we saw earlier in the chapter, to check this wastage the party now officially entreats branches to persuade members to subscribe to the party through bank orders.⁴

In country electorates the recruitment of members is chiefly the responsibility of the electorate organiser, but the branches give him

¹SE, 30 November 1951.

²E.g., Minutes of Burwood branch, 4 August 1960; Minutes of Kew branch, 1 June 1960.

³Minutes of Burwood branch, 8 December 1954.

⁴Circular letter from Central Office to Branch Secretaries, February 1967.

valuable assistance. A committee member of a local branch will often accompany the organiser on a canvass in a particular locality. Being known in the area the member can smooth the way for the party organiser who may live many miles away. The local knowledge of branch activists can also be of specific assistance to the organiser in undertaking selective recruitment. Thus one branch secretary was able to give the organiser an electoral roll on which were indicated all unfinancial members and also those persons whom the branch committee considered worth approaching for bank orders.¹

The Liberal Party has maintained its mass membership with an ideological fervour and an organisational efficiency which its non-Labor predecessors lacked. Regarding a large membership as desirable, the Liberal Party has not merely specified minimal conditions for membership, but has constantly emphasised the need for recruitment activities by the branches and through the employment of field organisers. Against this the extent to which the party is able to build up a mass membership is constrained by the widespread indifference among electors towards political participation; more directly it is also constrained by the limitations of the party's organising resources. There is no doubt that in country and suburban electorates alike, continuous and systematic recruiting by field organisers is a more effective method of maintaining a high membership than reliance on the erratic and often half-hearted efforts of individual branches. Given the party's tolerance of nominal

¹Minutes of Camperdown branch, 2 April 1959.

members, membership in the metropolitan area would certainly be higher if the party had sufficient finance to employ field organisers in all suburban electorates.

As is typical of all mass parties, but more especially of non-Labor or 'conservative' ones which do not stress membership activity as much as parties of the 'left',¹ inactive nominal members comprise by far the largest component of the Liberal Party's membership. Nonetheless, since its formation, the party has maintained a level of active membership adequate both for its electioneering needs and for the reasonable functioning of its institutional structure.

¹Cf. Epstein, Political Parties in Western Democracies, p.122; Blondel, Voters, Parties and Leaders, p.93.

CHAPTER 6

LOCAL ORGANISATION

BRANCHES

In any polity there is a grass-roots level of political activity carried on by persons who, although they may have no ambition for public office, voluntarily support the efforts of other people to enter the institutions of government. With the widening of franchises and the creation of mass electorates, parties have tended to engage in organised recruitment of such partisans in order to build up a primary or grass-roots level of organisation.¹

In the Liberal Party, as in all major Australian parties, branches are the primary units of organisation; joining the party means enrolling in a branch. The branches order the mass membership into functional and administrative units, and they provide the base for a hierarchical framework of institutions; most other party units are derived directly or indirectly from them.

Liberal branches have a number of purposes, the first being to provide organised assistance for endorsed candidates during their election campaigns; secondly, they are responsible for raising party funds and for recruiting new members to the party, these two activities overlapping; thirdly, branches have a policy-making role and are conceived of as two-way channels of political communication between Liberal

¹See Duverger, Political Parties, Introduction and Chapter 1.

parliamentarians and their constituents; fourthly, the branches share in the general functions of political socialisation of members and the recruitment of organisational or parliamentary leaders. They are thus multi-purpose structures, and through their branches party members are given an opportunity to take part in a variety of political activities.

Formal Aspects of Branch Organisation¹

The constitutional requirements for a branch are not demanding, yet in practice not all branches are able to meet them. A branch is defined in the constitution as a group of no fewer than twenty members. If it is to survive, however, at least seven of the members must be activists who will comprise the office bearers and committee of the branch. To keep within the constitution and avoid being declared defunct by the State Executive, a branch is required to hold an annual meeting in March or April and to forward to the Central Office the names of its office bearers and persons elected to represent it on the various electorate committees and the State Council. This ensures that party officials have an overall picture of the condition of the branch organisation in all electorates.

Establishing a branch may call for a series of judgements concerning the electoral need for it, its likely viability, and perhaps the motives of those who are pressing for its creation. Some check on the branch-building activities of individuals is regarded as desirable. The

¹See Constitution, 1965, Clauses 12-26.

formal approval of the State Executive is therefore necessary before a branch may be set up in any locality.¹ This is intended as a safeguard against the indiscriminate creation of short-term branches designed primarily to serve the objectives of an ambitious person or group. It is useful moreover for the Executive to be able to inhibit the formation of branches which could be politically embarrassing in federal electorates, like Gippsland and Murray, which have been 'ceded' pro tem to the Country Party. The actual process of forming a branch, however, rarely involves a collective decision by the Executive. In the past the Executive has always sanctioned the creation of a branch on the recommendation of a sub-committee (the Branch Development Committee), the general secretary or a field organiser.

In addition to the general supervisory role exercised by the Executive, the constitution lays down specific restrictions on the formation of branches in order to forestall certain obvious abuses of the powers of branches in the selection of parliamentary candidates. Thus the constitution bans the formation of new branches in the period fixed by the State Executive during which existing branches in an electorate must consider whether the sitting member of parliament is to be re-endorsed, and during a specified period before the holding of a pre-selection convention.

A factor which adds to the necessity for central control over the

¹Ibid., Clause 12 (i).

formation of branches is that they are conceived of as territorial units as well as groups of members. All electorates in which the party is organised are divided into areas each of which is the exclusive province of a particular branch. In carrying out their electoral activities, branches therefore have a two-level responsibility: a particular responsibility within their own territory and a shared responsibility within their respective electorates. This precise delineation of branch territories undoubtedly contributes to the noticeably parochial outlook of most branches, especially in suburban electorates; but it greatly simplifies the organisation of electoral duties. Moreover, parochialism does not only or necessarily detract from the functioning of the branch system of organisation. The preference shown by most members for confining their political activities to an immediate and familiar locality redounds to the party's advantage if it deepens even slightly the often shallow involvement of many activists in party affairs.

Defining the boundaries of a branch is part of the process of forming the branch and is therefore a power reserved to the State Executive. In the suburbs branch boundaries are spelled out in precise detail. As far as possible they are drawn to coincide with electorate or subdivisional boundaries in order to simplify election organisation and to avoid the confusing situation (for example, when a candidate selection convention is held¹) of a branch's having a significant proportion of

¹The number of representatives that a branch is entitled to send to an electorate convention to select a candidate is determined by the number of branch members in that electorate, not the total branch membership.

its membership distributed through more than one electorate. A redistribution of the boundaries of state or federal electorates usually brings in its wake a number of alterations to established branch territories. In the suburbs, quite widespread changes were necessary after the federal redistribution in 1955¹ and the state redistribution in 1967. On such occasions branches do not always accept interference with their demesnes with good grace, especially when this means a loss of hard-won members.² In the face of branch parochialism, it is the unhappy task of the assistant general secretary to adjust the boundaries of branches after each redistribution.

In addition to creating branches and adjusting their boundaries the State Executive may dissolve any branch whose actions are 'detrimental to the interests of the Party'.³ However, there are formal checks to the exercise of this power (which apparently has never been used). Such action requires the concurrence of two-thirds of the members of the Executive and is also subject to appeal to the State Council. The power to dissolve branches is held in reserve by the Executive to meet the contingency of a 'rebel' committee capturing an existing branch, probably in order to lend support to an unendorsed candidate. For much the same reason, and also in order to get a failing branch going again, the general secretary has authority to declare branch offices vacant and to call the

¹SE, 7 October 1955; 10 February 1956.

²E.g., Minutes of Canterbury branch, 15 August 1955.

³Constitution, Clause 18A.

annual meeting of a branch where this has not already been done during the prescribed period in March and April.¹

All branches are officially classified as 'rural' or 'metropolitan', a division which in effect distinguishes Melbourne suburban branches from the rest. The main purpose of this division is to implement a rule, introduced in 1949, that the State Executive, party offices and the joint policy committee are to comprise an equal number of members from rural and metropolitan branches. The Executive thus has the additional task of defining, subject to confirmation by the State Council, which branches are in which category.² The growth of the metropolitan area makes it necessary from time to time to clarify the status of branches in the new outer suburbs. In 1961, for example, forty-one such branches in the mixed rural-suburban federal electorates of Deakin, Lalor, Bruce, La Trobe and Flinders were reclassified as metropolitan. This had become necessary in order to redress a growing numerical imbalance between the two categories of branches. Although rural branches had always outnumbered metropolitan, this difference had grown until, by the end of the 1950s, there were more than twice as many of the former as the latter. Between 1953 and 1957 the number in the metropolitan group had declined from 132 to 109, mainly as a result of the collapse of branches in the inner-city Labor-held electorates, while the formation of a number of new branches in the outer semi-suburban areas only aggravated the relative trend, since these often fell within the

¹Ibid., Clause 22.

²Ibid., Clause 32 (iii).

so-called rural division. Consequently, in this period, the number of rural branches increased slightly from 238 to 249,¹ despite the high 'mortality rate' among branches in small country centres. But after the Executive had reclassified the branches in 1961 there were 145 metropolitan to 217 rural branches.² This has remained the approximate balance between the two categories.

The Reality of Branch Organisation

Throughout Victoria there are approximately 360 branches scattered unevenly among the electorates. This number was reached quite early in the existence of the party: by 1949 there were over 300. But a stable total conceals the continuous changes going on at branch level. Every year new branches are formed while others cease to exist, and moribund branches are revived while active ones begin to decline. As one would expect, the distribution of branches closely follows the map of membership. The electorates with the greatest number of branches are also those with the most members, while in country electorates the geographical scattering of towns and settlements is another determinant of the pattern of branches.

Just as the well-organised country electorates were found to have more members than their suburban counterparts, as a result of the regular canvassing for members by permanent field organisers, so too the individual branches with the largest nominal memberships are often located in country centres. As Table 6.1 shows, the membership of branches varies widely,

¹President's Reports to State Council, 18-19 February 1953; 1-2 March 1957.

²SE, 3 November 1961.

although, as we shall see later, the groups of active members in each branch are more uniform in size. In the suburbs, branches usually have fewer than 100 members. The small size of branch areas inhibits the growth of much larger memberships where they might be expected - in blue-ribbon Liberal electorates. In Kooyong, for example, the territories of

TABLE 6.1
MEMBERSHIP OF TYPICAL BRANCHES

* Camperdown	(3,500)	302	Kew North		60
Deepdene		230	* Lorne	(1,500)	60
* Skipton	(600)	230	West Hawthorn		60
* St. Arnaud	(3,200)	200	Carlton		54
* Ararat	(8,500)	164	* Anglesea	(700)	53
* Colac	(9,300)	150	Greensborough		50
Burwood		108	Greythorn		50
Kew		100	* Nhill	(2,300)	45
Canterbury		92	Box Hill North		42
* Rupanyup	(700)	92	* Apollo Bay	(1,200)	35
* Bolac	(700)	90	Kew South East		33
Eltham		87	* Derrinallum	(750)	26
* Ecklin		85	Chatham		25
* Gellibrand		80			
North Camberwell		71			
Studley Park		65			

Note: Figures are for the latest year since 1960 for which data was available. Country branches are indicated with an asterisk, and the approximate population of the centre from which the branch takes its name is given in brackets. These branches, however, draw many of their members from the surrounding countryside.

Source: Branch minute books, branch secretaries.

the individual branches range from approximately one half to one and one half square miles in area. As noted in the previous chapter, however, branches are generally not as assiduous about recruiting members as they might be, and those which are (such as the Deepdene branch) stand out as striking exceptions.

Two stages in the development of the rural branch structure may be recognised. Branches were first established in the main towns of the western and northern regions of the state during the initial eighteen months of the party's existence. The foundations for a strong Liberal organisation in those areas were already present, especially in the tradition of support for the non-Labor parties in the grazier-dominated Western District. Indeed, the resources of money and men from the latter were sufficiently valuable for Menzies to regard it as worth his while to spend a week touring the Western District, having given up his legal practice in order to assist with the establishing of the party in Victoria and N.S.W.¹

The second and more prolific phase of branch-building activity occurred between 1948 and 1950, when the party's organisational resources were at maximum strength. Field organisers established scores of branches in the smaller centres. The results of their activities were supplemented in 1949, especially in northern and north-western electorates, when a number of former Country Party members switched their loyalty to the Liberal Party. Many of these smaller branches, however, failed to take root. In

¹ Argus, 5 April 1945.

1954 alone, the Branch Development Committee recommended to the Executive that thirty moribund country branches be disbanded.¹

In rural electorates, responsibility for organising new branches or reviving failing ones rests primarily with the field organiser, an M.P. or an endorsed candidate. One of the stronger branches or an electorate committee may also take the initiative in reviewing the state of branches within the electorate. An example of this occurred in 1961 when the Camperdown branch wrote to the Corangamite electorate committee asking it to investigate the decline in the numbers of branches and pointing out that branches no longer existed at Cobden, Ecklin South and Beeac.² In this case, however, neither the vigilance of the branch nor the efforts of the electorate committee produced much action. The electorate organiser subsequently reported that he hoped to re-form the branch at Cobden 'sometime'.³

As a preliminary step towards forming or reviving a branch the electorate organiser may undertake a canvass for members in the district. But it is more necessary that he find persons ready to act as office bearers -- and this may not always be easy. To give but one example: the Orford branch, which had not met since 1954, was disbanded in 1959, for although it had a sufficient number of members to comply with the constitution, none of them was willing to hold office.⁴ A branch without

¹SE, 19 March 1954.

²Minutes of Camperdown branch, 15 August 1961.

³Ibid., 27 March 1962. The Cobden branch was revived in February 1966 (interview with branch secretary, July 1967).

⁴SE, 19 June 1959.

office bearers is not merely unconstitutional, it is useless, for the raison d'etre of any branch is the group of activists who are prepared to work for the party, as shown by their willingness to keep the branch running.

The country branches which the field organisers help to form are often fragile structures in which personal relationships may be as important as party commitment in keeping alive faint sparks of interest in political activity. An effective organiser must develop a sensitive awareness of local feelings and be ready to placate them when necessary. Thus we find the Corangamite organiser smoothing ruffled feelings while allocating electoral chores to a branch before the 1963 federal elections:

I am not sure of the position at Apollo Bay after the airstrip question -- about which I agree with you -- so does Tom Darcy, [the local state member] I know. Anyhow I'm sending... [manifestos and envelopes] to you to arrange addressing. If you do not feel you can assist, please pass them on to Mrs. - . I estimate... to cover 500 households... Cost of stamps will be refunded as soon as I am advised of the actual cost. Letters should be posted about 23 Nov. Forgive me if I am doing the wrong thing.¹

A tactful, conscientious and popular field organiser can contribute significantly to maintaining a rudimentary branch structure in country electorates.

Branches in the small rural centres lead a delicate existence. The 'life history' of the Trafalgar (McMillan) and Tallangatta (Indi) branches is typical of many. Trafalgar, 'alive' in 1949, declined and was disbanded in 1954, then was revived, only to be disbanded again in

¹Letter, Area Staff Officer to Secretary of Apollo Bay branch, 14 November 1963.

1962. The Tallangatta branch, having declined after 1949, was reorganised in 1959, but was again declared defunct in 1962. However, even when a branch is 'off the books', because it is unable to fulfil its minimum constitutional requirements, there is likely to remain in the locality a few loyal party activists who are willing to assist during election campaigns. In 1959, for example, the Cobden branch was officially 'written off',¹ but the former (and future) secretary and his mother continued to carry out the basic electoral tasks expected of a branch,^{until} it was revived in 1966.² These informal 'contact groups' must be regarded as a distinctive element in the structure of rural organisation. Recognising their value, the Branch Development Committee in 1959 recommended that,

in order to maintain a continuity of interest when Branches had been disbanded or cannot be reformed, the Executive should encourage key workers to promote the interest of the Party in those areas and keep in touch with Head Quarters.³

Shortly after, the committee also suggested that the state president send a letter to 'key workers' to give them official recognition and encouragement.⁴

As a comparison of Tables 6.2 and 6.3 shows, country branches are not as active as those in the suburbs.⁵ This no doubt is in part a simple

¹SE, 30 January 1959.

²Interview, July 1967.

³SE, 30 January 1959.

⁴Ibid., 20 February 1959.

⁵Cf. the description of Country Party branches in a similar setting in N.S.W., in D.A. Aitkin, *The Organisation of the Australian Country Party (N.S.W.) 1946-62*, Ph.D. thesis, A.N.U., 1964, pp. 183-90. It is also relevant to this point that research into political behaviour provides evidence that 'farmers are less likely to become active in politics than city dwellers' (Lester W. Milbrath, *Political Participation*, Chicago, 1965, p.128). Sorauf also discusses the influence on party activity of 'variations in political culture associated with urban-rural differences' (Frank J. Sorauf, *Party and Representation: Legislative Politics in Pennsylvania*, New York, 1963, p.61).

TABLE 6.2

NUMBER OF MEETINGS PER YEAR: COUNTRY BRANCHES

	'45	'46	'47	'48	'49	'50	'51	'52	'53	'54	'55	'56	'57	'58	'59	'60	'61	'62	'63	'64	'65	'66
Anglesea											3*	1	2	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1
Apollo Bay				4*	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	0	1	2
Bolac			2*	3	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	1	1	1
Camperdown			/1	3	4	2	6	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	5	4
Colac	/1	15	10	12	11	17	9	11	10	10	10	13	12	10	8	4	4	4	1	0	2	2
Derrinallum		4*	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Ecklin									/1	1	2	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	2	3	3
Gellibrand															4*	3	2	1	0	1	1	1
Lorne							1*	6	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	1	1	1	1
Nhill				11*	1	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	1
Rupanyup				2*	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
St. Arnaud				9*	10	5	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	3
Skipton	3*	4	3	1	3	3	2	6	2	1	3	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	1
Elections:	L	H	L	H	L	H	L	S	H	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	H	H	L	L	H
	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S

* Inaugural year
 / Beginning or end of available records
 Elections:
 L = Legislative Assembly
 H = House of Representatives
 S = Senate

Source: Branch minutes

TABLE 6.3

NUMBER OF MEETINGS PER YEAR: SUBURBAN BRANCHES

	'45	'46	'47	'48	'49	'50	'51	'52	'53	'54	'55	'56	'57	'58	'59	'60	'61	'62	'63	'64	'65	'66
Belmore												/2	4	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	5
Box Hill North												6*	10	7	8	5	3	1	4	4	1	
Burwood	9*	13	12	8	9	7	6	8	7	6	6	6	4	6	4	5	5	3	4	5	5	5
Canterbury									/7	12	8	7	11	12	9	12	11	8	7	4	5	
Carlton																					10*	
Chatham																/3	1	4	2	1	3	
Darling-East Malvern	8*	22	16	17	22	20	19	11	8/													
Deepdene	19*	11	9	11	9	6	6	3	4	2	3	5	3	3	2	2	3	3	5	5	5	8
East Kew							/3	4	4	2	2	3	0	3	0	2	4	1	2	2	2	3
Eltham	6*	3	5	1	4	4	2	4	4	4	2	2	1	2	1	4	8	2	3	2	2	2
Greensborough	2*	7	4	9	6	2	6	14	6	5	7	2	8	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	3	2
Greythorn																					/1	7
Kew	11*	7	10	10	13	11	11	7	9	6	3	4	5	5	3	3	4	2	1	3	2	2
Kew North East									/2	7	6	3	3	5	1	3	6	6	7	6	7	7
Kew South East												/8	10	5	9	8	9	9	9	9	9	8
North Kew	7*	5	4	4	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	3	2	2	5	2	2	3
North Camberwell									/7	10	9	10	11	10	11	9	10	8	9	11	7	
Studley Park																/5	4	3	2/			
West Hawthorn												/8	3	1	2	6	5	6	3	8		
Elections:	L	H	L	H	L	H	L	S	H	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	L	H	L	L	H	H
	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	H	H	S	S	S	S	S	S	H	S	S	S	S

* Inaugural year
 / Beginning or end of available records
 Elections: L = Legislative Assembly
 H = House of Representatives
 S = Senate

Source: Branch minutes

factor of location: the members of country and town branches are more widely dispersed and it is less convenient for them than for suburban branch members to hold regular meetings. Country branches, therefore, have not developed their potential social functions as strongly as their suburban counterparts.¹ Another constraint on country branch activity is the limited extent to which farmers see participation in party affairs as relevant to their problems. Countrymen in general regard the various primary producers' organisations as the main safeguards of their interests; country voters are exponents and practitioners of pressure group politics, as much as party politics. Consequently, party branches are regarded as having an electoral purpose above all others; their social, educative and policy-making functions are minimal compared with many suburban branches.² Thus, at least one country branch president may be found expressing the view that the branch had a responsibility to its members not to make unwarranted demands on their time by meeting too often:

I feel that with so many of our members concerned in other local interests that unless it is a case of importance our meetings should be kept to such a minimum, provided that we can still keep up Branch numbers and have our members ready and willing at such times that they may be called upon to help the Branch at elections etc.³

As Table 6.2 indicates, branches located⁴ in the smaller country

¹See below, p.171.

²For differences in policy-making activity between country and suburban branches, see below, p.161.

³Minutes of Camperdown branch, 17 March 1964.

⁴Here the 'location' of a branch refers to the town or locality after which it is named.

towns rarely call a formal meeting more often than once a year, when the annual general meeting is held to 'elect' a committee, as required by the constitution. Indeed, the distinction between the contact groups and some so-called branches is often a constitutional nicety. The Dunolly branch, for example, was a constitutional branch on paper, yet according to its secretary it had held no meetings for at least eight years and relied on the electorate organiser to send in the necessary annual return of branch office holders to the party's Central Office.¹ The secretary of the branch claimed, however, that at election time he was able to find enough helpers to assist him with the few necessary campaign tasks. The position at Minyip, where the secretary complained of having to spend ten hours at the polling booth handing out how-to-vote cards,² was no better; clearly this branch too was no more than a notional one. Country pragmatism governs the running of these branches. The formalities of branch life (including meetings and a minute book) are often dispensed with -- because they are considered unnecessary. What has to be done by way of electioneering or the selection of a parliamentary candidate may be adequately arranged 'over the phone' or when the branch activists happen to meet on informal occasions.

By comparison with these smaller country branches the examples of Colac and Camperdown in the sample point to a tendency for the rate of activity of branches in the larger centres, which provide a semi-suburban

¹Interview, July 1967.

²Ibid.

location, to resemble those in the metropolitan suburbs.

The metropolitan branch structure is firmly rooted in the basic socio-political differences of an urban environment. Liberal branches are confined almost entirely to middle and upper-middle-class suburbs. In the early years of the party, branches were established, if rather insecurely, in working-class areas. But the problems of enrolling enough members and of finding the activists to run the branches demanded permanent electorate organisers. In allocating field staff, however, country electorates are given priority over these unwinnable Labor-held seats. Consequently, by 1955, most of the branches in the so-called industrial electorates were defunct. Three recently-formed branches - Carlton (Scullin), Brunswick West and Coburg (Wills) - owe their (temporary) existence mainly to the activities of members of the Young Liberal Movement.¹ The Carlton branch moreover is run by members from nearby Melbourne University.

In the suburbs, as in the country, office bearers and the nucleus of a committee must be found before a branch can be formed. Individual activists in existing branches often provide the driving force for the creation of new ones and may thereby achieve the opportunity of running their 'own' branches. Politically ambitious activists in particular welcome such a role. Once formed, a middle-class suburban branch is a more permanent structure than its country counterpart; it may need

¹Victorian Liberal Leader, No.8, February 1967, p.13. The Coburg branch did not prove viable and was disbanded in 1968 (SE, 14 June 1968).

stimulating from time to time, but will rarely decline to the point of being declared defunct. A party's organisational structure is far easier to maintain in a suburban than a rural setting.

Table 6.3 indicates the variations in rates of activity among and within suburban branches. These differences stem from factors internal to each branch, rather than from their environments. Branches are inward-looking structures whose activities are more a reflection of the attitudes and motivations of their committee members than the electoral needs of the party. Being located in a marginal electorate does not appear to stimulate branches into greater or different kinds of political activity. On the evidence of the sample, the most active branches are to be found in the suburbs where the Liberal vote is highest; yet there are notable exceptions to this. The point can best be illustrated by reference to the two extremes of branch activity in the blue-ribbon Liberal electorate of Kooyong. Here the most apathetic branch met only twenty-three times in ten years, while the most active one held ninety-six meetings in the same period.

The constitution, we have noted, merely stipulates the holding of one general meeting each year. Apart from this branches are free to conduct or neglect their activities. The rate and nature of each branch's activities are thus very largely determined by their committees' views of the role of their branches in the party.

All activists would agree that a branch has an electoral role to play, involving such tasks as electioneering, canvassing for members, and contributing finance to the organisation. This is a minimal view of the

functions of branches. In addition, some activists insist that branches have a more general purpose, such as providing an opportunity for members to acquire political knowledge or contributing to the formulation of party policies. Not surprisingly, the branches which are dominated by such members tend to be the most active and certainly the most policy-oriented. But they are a minority. In general the activities of the branches fall well below the expectations of those who hold to the latter broad view of the functions of branches. The following passage from a report of the Branch Development Committee to the State Executive sums up the somewhat scornful attitude of such members towards the condition of many of the branches:

the majority of Victorian Branches lack any real drive and most of the members are apathetic and unwilling to devote much time to Party affairs. The worst examples in fact are found in blue ribbon electorates where Branches carry out the formalities between election campaigns but have little or no informed political discussion and are totally unwilling to accept obligations outside the particular electorate.¹

The functioning of the branches is thus another reminder of the limited involvement of most activists in party affairs. While a few activists can chide party officials and parliamentarians for too often treating branches 'merely as sources of finance and providers of manpower for polling day',² most are satisfied with just this role. There is thus a genuine note of achievement in the annual report of the branch which was able to state, after a year in which both federal and state elections

¹Report of Branch Development Committee to State Executive, 9 October 1959.

²Liberal Speakers Group, Survey of Organisation, 1956.

were fought, that it 'had fulfilled its main purpose in meeting its financial commitments and other obligations in respect of the elections held'.¹ Those branches which emphasise electoral activities above all others find little to do between elections. Thus, at its annual meeting after the electioneering holiday of 1965 (a fairly rare event in Victoria), the Chatham branch recorded without shame that there was no annual report 'as there was nothing to report'.²

Some indication of the uneven interest of branches in party policy can be gained by examining the agendas of the State Council and noting the frequency with which individual branches sponsor policy resolutions. Assuming a constant total of 350 branches in recent years, we find that between approximately 12 and 20 per cent of the branches send resolutions to any one meeting of the Council. Over several consecutive meetings, the number rises cumulatively to, at the most, 40 per cent of all branches. Thus, a total of 133 branches (38 per cent) were listed on the agendas of the four Council meetings of July 1967, February 1968, August 1968 and February 1969. Taking a longer period, from August 1957 to February 1967, during which twenty meetings of the Council were held, 191 different branches sponsored resolutions.³ Remembering that in the course of a decade the cumulative total of branches will have been greater than the 350 here assumed, it is apparent that more than half of the party's branches never send a policy resolution to the Council.

¹Minutes of Kew branch, 29 March 1962.

²Minutes of Chatham branch, 3 March 1966.

³Calculated from Minutes of State Councils, 1957-67.

In fact, the policy-making function of the Council is even more narrowly-based than this suggests, for a relatively small number of policy-oriented branches sponsor a disproportionate share of the resolutions. Over half (52 per cent) of the resolutions on the agendas of the Councils between 1967 and 1969 were sponsored by only twenty-nine (22 per cent) of the 133 branches which sent in resolutions. Over the longer period, from 1957 to 1967, the disproportion was even more marked, 22 per cent of the participant branches accounting for 60 per cent of the resolutions. In other words, one tenth or fewer of the party's branches dominate the business of the Council.

Metropolitan branches as a group are more active than country branches in the formulation of party policy: 63 per cent of the branches which sponsored resolutions to the Councils between 1957 and 1967 were located in the Melbourne area and Geelong. They accounted for three-quarters of all the resolutions - yet these areas have always contained a minority of the party's branches.

Some activists deplore the apathy of the bulk of the branches towards policy matters. They believe that a greater emphasis on policy would stimulate and give more purpose to branch meetings. They visualise the formulation of party policy as a process involving an informed membership and an attentive parliamentary party. A critique of party organisation by members of the Liberal Speakers Group provides the strongest statement of this viewpoint:

Many Branches devote their meetings to formalities and trivialities and lack real purpose. The members do not acquire political knowledge during the course of meetings nor can they be said to be well informed on the activities of the Party or the actions of the governments both State and Federal...

There is no good purpose to be served in holding discussions unless the membership sees some practical result. They must be encouraged to submit resolutions to State Council, to follow them up and to approach the local Member. The local Member must, in turn, pay due credit to the action of a Branch in raising some matter that results in administration change... there is a strong feeling in the Party that Ministers and M.P.'s are not taking adequate notice of their Branches and members and do not consult them on a continuing basis. Greater recognition should be given of the suggestions that come from Liberal Party members.¹

The party's object, the statement concluded, should be 'to create a more vigilant Party organization, respected by the Parliamentary Parties, capable of ensuring that full consultation between all sections takes place and that the Party's platform and policies are observed'.²

In 1952 and again in 1960 the Executive attempted to stimulate a greater interest in party policy among branch members by initiating a system of 'two-way' discussion topics. According to the plan, the branches would receive at intervals from the Central Office a list of political topics of current interest, meet to discuss them and communicate their opinions back to the Executive.³ On the first occasion that the system

¹Liberal Speakers Group, Survey of Organisation.

²Ibid.

³It is interesting to note that both attempts to stimulate policy discussion within the branches occurred when the party's popularity as measured by public opinion polls was at its two lowest levels in the period 1945-68, and there was a feeling among non-parliamentary leaders that the politicians were out of touch with public opinion.

was tried, it failed and was soon abandoned. Too few branches bothered to call meetings to discuss the topics. The second attempt in 1960 was successful for a short time, but within two years it also had been terminated. It was suggested on this occasion that interested members establish discussion groups within their branches, or even within electorates, nominating a group leader to whom the topics would be sent.¹ Although there is no evidence that any inter-branch groups were formed, the idea 'caught on' among the active nucleus of committee members in many branches. A few months after the scheme was initiated, the party's president reported to the State Council that 250 discussion groups had been formed.² Later in 1960, the joint policy committee discussed a summary of the groups' replies to several topics.³ Yet by 1962, two-way topics had been discontinued, largely, it may be conjectured, because their novelty soon passed and branch interest waned - except among the most policy-oriented branches which least needed stimulating. The fault, however, may not have been all on the side of the branches; at least one branch blamed the Central Office for failing to maintain the supply of material necessary to keep the discussion groups active.⁴ Nonetheless there is little the party can do to stimulate a deeper involvement of members in activities to which they are normally indifferent.

¹SE, 8 April 1960.

²President's Annual Report to State Council, 24 August 1960.

³SE, 9 December 1960.

⁴Minutes of Canterbury branch, 20 March 1962.

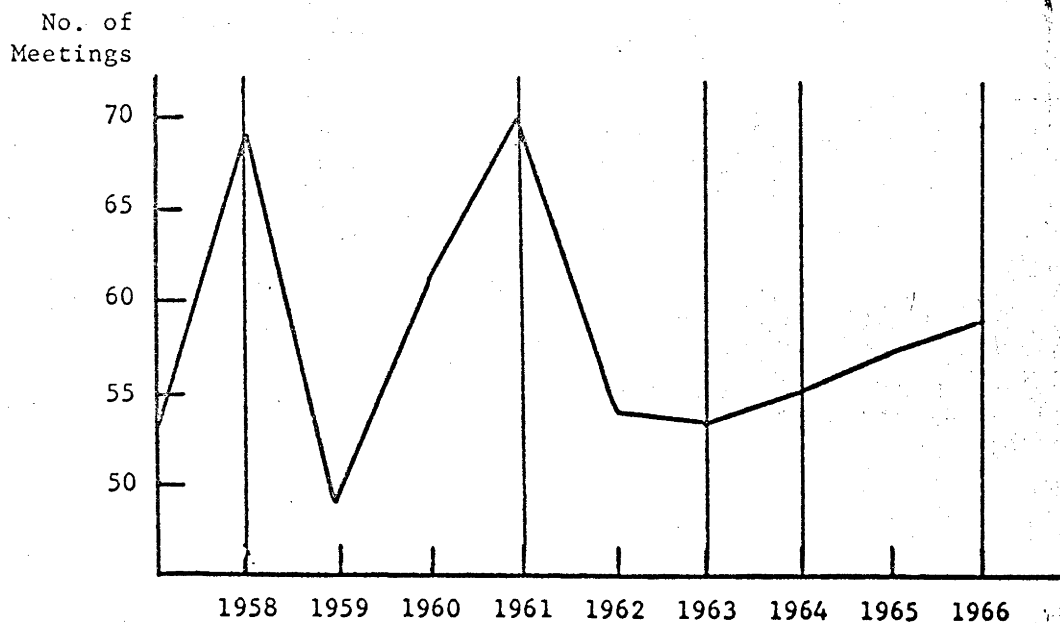
It is usual to regard Liberal branches as 'seasonal' in character, tending 'to lose their momentum between elections'.¹ Certainly the available manpower of all branches is most fully mobilised at election time, while the role perceptions of most activists are such that they also work more purposefully and confidently at election tasks than in other fields of party activity. But the same could be said for most major parties. In fact, as Tables 6.2 and 6.3 above, and Figure 6.1 below indicate, while there is some evidence that the occurrence of elections imposes a rhythm on the incidence of branch meetings, it is neither consistent nor marked. The reason appears to be that much of the work of organising election campaigns at the local level is done outside the confines of formal branch meetings - unlike, for example, the branches' policy-making activities.² This, of course, is simply a reminder that a formal branch structure is not essential for the conduct of election campaigns, though it is, as the non-Labor parties now accept, a useful device for maintaining a supply of available labour for electioneering. Also, as was indicated in the previous chapter, the Liberal Party has sought to maintain a permanent branch structure for both ideological and financial reasons. The Liberal Party therefore does not experience the sort of 'rebirth' of branches at election time that was characteristic of its non-Labor predecessors. Liberal branches are routinely administered by the Central Office as permanent institutions, and the pattern of their activity reflects this

¹James Jupp, Australian Party Politics, p.141.

²A policy resolution which a branch wishes to send to the State Council must be passed at a general meeting of the branch.

FIGURE 6.1

NUMBER OF BRANCH MEETINGS IN ELECTION AND
NON-ELECTION YEARS



—	General Elections
1958	Legislative Assembly House of Representatives Senate
1961	Legislative Assembly House of Representatives Senate
1963	House of Representatives
1964	Legislative Assembly Senate
1966	House of Representatives

Note: Data from thirteen typical suburban branches

TABLE 6.4
ATTENDANCE AT BRANCH MEETINGS 1945-67^a

Suburban Branches	Years for which records available	Type of Meeting						Attendance at largest meeting recorded
		'Committee'			'General' & 'Annual'			
		Total meetings	Aggregate attendance	Average attendance	Total meetings	Aggregate attendance	Average attendance	
Belmore	1957-66	-	-	-	12	91	7	12
Burwood	1945-67	28	197	7	30	505	17	38
Box Hill North	1957-67	32	243	7	9	152	17	25
Canterbury	1954-67	91	960	10	14	356	25	61
Chatham	1961-67	-	-	-	9	139	15	31
Deepdene	1945-67	-	-	-	8	176	22	35
East Kew	1951-66	17	144	8	17	231	13	23
Eltham	1945-66	30	286	9	28	438	16	37
Greensborough	1946-66	30	369	12	37	482	13	22
Greythorn	1964-67	-	-	-	17	176	10	16
Kew	1945-67	49	462	9	31	759	24	125
Kew North East	1953-66	10	83	8	53	610	11	23
Kew South East	1957-67	37	347	9	48	509	11	22
North Kew	1946-67	inadequate record			57	527	10	23
North Camberwell	1954-67	20	265	13	inadequate record			24
Studley Park	1961-64	5	51	10	1	11	11	13
West Hawthorn	1958-67	21	150	7	21	239	11	27
Rural and Town Branches								
Anglesea	1959-67	3	18	6	7	63	9	18
Apollo Bay	1947-67	-	-	-	12	88	7	21
Bolac	1949-66	-	-	-	16	277	17	25
Camperdown	1952-67	3	19	6	50	590	12	24
Colac	1948-67	94	738	8	24	475	20	44
Derrinallum	1949-67	-	-	-	19	129	7	13
Ecklin	1957-66	-	-	-	12	148	12	18
Gellibrand	1960-66	-	-	-	12	81	7	8
Lorne	1955-67	-	-	-	22	183	8	16
Nhill	1949-67	16	131	8	14	150	11	23
Rupanyup	1949-67	-	-	-	17	164	10	21
St. Arnaud	1949-66	22	208	9	19	192	10	25
Skipton	1945-66	-	-	-	41	511	12	26
		532	4671	9	667	8452	13	

^a Figures for each branch are approximate. Attendance numbers are not always recorded by branches, thus the total number of meetings is no indication of the actual number held by a branch during the years for which records were available and the Table is not to be read as an indication of rates of branch activity.

Source: Branch minutes.

as much as the incidence of elections.

Many branches distinguish between general meetings, which all members are entitled to attend, and committee meetings involving only the branches' elected executives and office bearers. Table 6.4 sets out, as fully as our data will allow, a comparison between 'committee' and 'general' meetings. As a glance at the 'average attendance' column indicates, the difference is not great: an overall average of nine persons attended branch committee meetings, compared with thirteen at general meetings. General meetings do not attract the wide participation by members that was once visualised and some still hope to achieve. In the sample of branches used in this study, nearly 90 per cent of branch meetings held since 1960 were attended by fifteen people or fewer (Table 6.5).

TABLE 6.5

ATTENDANCE AT BRANCH MEETINGS 1960-7

No. attending meeting	Percentage of meetings
Under 10	60
11 -15	27
16 -20	8
Over 21	5
	100%
	(N = 506)

Note: Data from meetings of thirty-one typical suburban and country branches.

Source: Branch minute books.

In effect, then, the general meetings of branches are but slightly amplified committee meetings. Indeed, the committee members themselves make up a large proportion of those attending, while local members of parliament, a guest speaker, and the spouses or friends of regular branch activists typically account for most of the others at the meeting. In describing the branches in action, therefore, there is little point in preserving the distinction between committee and general meetings. Rates of participation among branch members are so low that the committee is really the branch.¹ Indeed it is not uncommon for all persons attending the annual meeting of a branch to be 'elected' to its committee, or for newly-enrolled members who are known to be interested in party activities to be invited to committee meetings.

Most party members have stolidly resisted the efforts of activists to entice them into branch meetings. Over the years various ideas for solving the problem of apathy have been suggested, and some tried out. Sometimes the solution has been seen in a greater emphasis on the political content of party activity, as for example the experiments with two-way discussion topics, or the suggested, but never tried, publication by Central Office of a regular news-sheet for distribution to all members.² More often a de-emphasis of politics has been regarded as a better lure - such as the use of films and slides, and guest speakers who will address

¹ Cf. Duverger's description of 'Conservative or Centre' (i.e. middle-class) parties: 'Fundamentally the real basic element of the party is here the branch committee, which meets regularly and ensures the day-to-day functioning of the organisation' (Political Parties, p.15).

² SE, 10 May 1957.

the branch on non-political topics of 'general interest'. None of these ploys has noticeably increased the rate of participation among members, but they have doubtless helped to make branch life more varied and interesting for the regular activists. Branches must come to terms with an electorate and a membership which are largely indifferent to party activity.

THE SOCIAL CHARACTER OF BRANCHES

The Liberal Party's branches are close-knit, socially homogeneous, middle-class structures.¹ The membership of individual branches in the sample (and, it may be inferred from this, the membership of the party as a whole) is fairly evenly divided between the sexes. This appears to be a far more pronounced characteristic of the Liberal Party than the other main parties.² Several explanations may be advanced for this:

¹Cf.: Subjective Class of Party Members in an Australian Sample

	Liberal	A.L.P.(branch)	Country	D.L.P.
Middle class	30 (73%)	12 (48%)	15 (75%)	2 (50%)
Working class	5	13	4	2
Other	6	0	1	0

Source: Data from the Australian Survey Project. (See footnote 4, above, p.134.)

²E.g.: Sex of Party Members in an Australian Sample

	Liberal	A.L.P.(branch)	Country	D.L.P.
Male	22	22	13	4
Female	19	3	7	0

Source: Data from the Australian Survey Project.

first, the general cultural tendency for women to leave politics to the men is most strongly developed amongst working-class people; secondly, the Liberal Party more than the A.L.P. is tolerant of nominal members - who are more likely to be women; thirdly, and closely associated with the last, is the apparent high incidence of 'family membership' in the Liberal Party's branches (Table 6.6).

TABLE 6.6.

FAMILY GROUPS IN TYPICAL BRANCHES

Branch		Total branch membership	No. of members in family groups
Belmore	1966-7	41	34
Chatham	1961-2	94	59
Kew North	1959-60	61	35
*Apollo Bay	1959	56	48
*Anglesea	1967	53	44
*Ecklin	1967	85	38

* = Small town and country branches.

Source: Branch records.

Even at branch level the party's claim to be representative of people 'of all kinds' needs much qualification. Branch activists are mostly persons from professional, managerial, and white-collar occupations. This is a particular aspect of a wider relationship between class and party in Australia¹ which, in the case of the Liberal Party, is enhanced by the concentration of organising effort in middle-class areas and the relative absence of centrally-directed activity in the industrial

¹See, e.g., tables in Davies and Encel (eds.), Australian Society, p.110.

electorates. A socially-biased structure has developed. Indeed, the party's organisational structure at branch level seems manifestly unsuited to perform the function of social integration that is implied by the party's claim to be non-sectional in character.

Participation in party politics at branch level is largely a social activity. In the Liberal Party the typical suburban branch in action is a small group meeting in a well-furnished living room where politics and a middle-class life style are comfortably blended. It is a gathering of friends as well as a political meeting. Indeed, one of rewards of political activism is the sense of satisfaction to be gained from sharing with people similar to oneself an activity directed towards commonly-perceived goals. Social harmony is a requisite for the survival of the branch as an active unit of organisation. Personality clashes or religious or political disagreements within the group will cause members to drift away from it, for, given these frictions, a branch ceases to be a satisfying milieu for political activity. Branches clearly have a social function for party members, as well as being structures through which they assist the party to attain its electoral goals, and in some cases further their own political ambition.

Branches, then, are small groups of active party supporters embedded in a larger apathetic membership. How active a branch is depends on the inclinations of persons on its committee, for despite the contingent powers of the State Executive over the formation and maintenance of branches, in their day-to-day life they have a high degree of autonomy. There are thus 'gladiatorial' and nominal branches, just as there are

these kinds of members. As well as differing as a result of personal factors, branches are affected by their sociological and demographic environment; country branches, it was noted, although based on the same formal requirements and having the same purposes as their suburban counterparts, can be distinguished in a number of ways from the latter. Branches are at once the most numerous, the least specialised and the most varied of the structures comprising the party.

ELECTORATE COMMITTEES¹

Structure

The electorate committees are derived directly from the branches. Each branch elects four representatives (two men and two women) to a committee in each federal and state electorate in which the branch's territory is wholly or partly located. In the latter case, if fewer than twenty members of the branch live in the electorate, the branch elects only one man and one woman to the committee. Representatives must live in the electorate to act on its committee.² Because there are twelve such positions to fill, it is quite usual for an activist to represent his branch at least nominally on more than one electorate committee and possibly all three. This is not, however, an onerous position to be in, as will be seen from the nature of the electorate committees. In practice,

¹The term includes the Federal Electorate Committees, State Assembly Electorate Committees, and State Province Electorate Committees.

²Constitution, Clause 56.

four representatives per branch is not an optimum number for the functioning of the electorate committee so much as a generous prescription which helps to ensure that each branch is represented by at least one person when the committee meets. This at any rate is how the branches appear to interpret the constitution, and the 'election' of representatives to the electorate committees is treated as a routine formality by branches at their annual meetings. The role of branch representative on an electorate committee has only as much meaning as the individual activist cares to give it. A member gains little in status by serving on a committee - unless he has the honour of being elected to hold office. The position of chairman in particular is likely to be coveted by politically ambitious activists, intent upon building up their party reputation with an eye to gaining pre-selection in the future.

The size of an electorate committee is determined by the number of branches contributing to it. Potentially, some of the federal electorate committees are unwieldy structures. Well-organised country electorates like Corangamite or Wimmera, for example, have committees nominally numbering eighty or more. But the fairly slight value that most activists place on their role of branch representative to an electorate committee is a reliable indication that the real structure of the committees will be rather different from their paper structure. Rarely do all four representatives of a branch attend an electorate committee meeting; rarely would all four find themselves 'available' on the same evening, or a branch have a viewpoint to present which required the backing of its maximum delegation. In the larger rural

electorates the distance that some members must travel to attend a meeting is sufficient to inhibit the presence of representatives from some branches. Moreover some of the party's weakest branches are to be found in such areas. In most electorates, therefore, the committee is much smaller in practice than on paper. Nevertheless, some of the committees in the federal divisions are large enough to be divided into subcommittees, while especially in rural or semi-rural regions an executive may act on behalf of the electorate committee as a whole, a device resorted to, for example, in the Deakin electorate. Here the executive comprises representatives from branches whose proximity to each other enables them to meet more conveniently. The executive keeps in touch with the more distant branches in the electorate by circular and through the field organiser.¹ In addition to branch representatives, meetings of the electorate committees are usually attended by the local M.P. or candidate and the electorate organiser, if there is one.

Status and Activities

The activities of electorate committees are twofold: those arising from their specified constitutional functions and those concerned with legitimate informal roles. The official functions of the committees are confined to the contesting of elections and the selection of candidates.² The functions and powers of the committees have deliberately been limited so as not to impinge upon those of the branches. In 1951 the

¹Information supplied by secretary, Deakin electorate committee.

²See respectively Chapters 12 and 10, below.

Executive ruled that electorate committees were to have power 'only to co-ordinate and not to direct Branches'.¹ Branches occupy a central place in the party's organisational doctrines: it is accepted as a democratic principle of organisation that no other institution may be interposed between them and the governing body of the party - the State Council. Electorate committees are thus not represented at the Council, cannot send policy resolutions to it (in fact they have no formal policy-making function at all), and they are not entitled to be represented at pre-selection conventions.²

Periodic attempts in the past to extend the powers of electorate committees have been rebuffed by the State Executive. Some activists have argued that the committees could appropriately take full responsibility for the development of branches in their electorates.³ But the Executive is not prepared to relinquish its ultimate responsibility in this field largely because, as was noted earlier, the expansion of the branch organisation in some federal electorates involves political considerations as well as a knowledge of the availability of finance and staff.

The Executive, however, has given its blessing to such unofficial activities of the electorate committees as are intended to stimulate the existing local organisation. It has resolved that:

¹ SE, 13 July 1951.

² It should be noted however that the province electorate committees act as conventions for selecting candidates for the Legislative Council (Constitution, Clause 69 (b)).

³ Liberal Speakers Group, Survey of Organisation.

Electorate Committees may continue to work between elections -- particularly with a view to establishing better inter-branch exchange of ideas and co-operation, and the promotion and enhancement of branch and Party reputation on the public minds.¹

Furthermore, in a document entitled 'Rules for the Guidance of Electorate Committees', which was compiled by the Central Office, the committees are reminded that they should elect as office bearers persons who are 'able to inculcate the branches with the spirit of all pulling together'. The office bearers, and in particular the chairmen, are counselled to keep in close touch with the branches in their electorates and to visit them at least once a year if possible.² There is no evidence that this is done in a systematic way.

Electorate committees have no need to meet regularly if they confine themselves to activities relating to election campaigns and candidate selection. The constitution accordingly allows for a greater period of dormancy than for the branches. It requires the committees to elect their officers only 'at least once in every three years',³ although in the 'Rules for the Guidance of Electorate Committees' the party encourages the annual election of officers. Most committees appear to follow this practice. Committees frequently resolve not to go into abeyance after an election, but to meet regularly and to exercise a general supervisory role over the organisation in their electorates. The state of the branches in their areas is an appropriate concern for the electorate committees, since

¹SE, 10 August 1951.

²[Central Office], Rules for the Guidance of Electorate Committees, [n.d.].

³Constitution, Clause 57.

the branches will be asked to implement the campaigns planned and budgeted for by the committees. This has already been illustrated in the previous section of the chapter with reference to the Camperdown branch's action in drawing the attention of the Corangamite electorate committee to the condition of certain branches in the area.¹ As another example, ^{after}the Box Hill state electorate committee had discussed the condition of two branches in its locality,² the organiser for the federal division of Deakin, which encompassed the Box Hill electorate, took steps to locate new office bearers for one of the branches and to call a long-overdue annual meeting.³ As a final, more recent example, in the Greensborough state electorate the chairman of the committee believes that it has an important continuous role to play in helping the Liberal M.L.A. retain what is regarded as a fairly marginal seat. The chairman aims to have the committee organise inter-branch social functions in an attempt to increase the rate of participation in party activities, and also to act as a channel for the communication of local problems to the parliamentarian concerned.⁴

In a haphazard manner some electorate committees thus institutionalise a need for an electorate - wide level of political activity. But the committees which act in this way are often very modified versions

¹ Above, p. 150.

² Minutes of Box Hill electorate committee, 31 May 1967.

³ Minutes of Box Hill North branch, 18 August 1967.

⁴ Information supplied by chairman, Greensborough electorate committee.

of their constituted structure. Rather, they are informal groups comprising the leading activists in the electorate, the local member of parliament or candidate and the electorate organiser. Men dominate these groups, although women nominally have equal representation with men on the electorate committees. The groups meet to discuss the general political problems of the electorate, keep a critical eye on the state of its branches, undertake the preliminary planning of the next election campaign and perhaps decide when a meeting of the electorate committee proper will next be called. At the same time the activists concerned satisfy their own desire for a fuller involvement in party affairs than the branches normally provide.

In conclusion, the most distinctive feature of the electorate committees is their peculiarly restricted role in the party and their relative lack of status. Although they might seem to be supra-branch structures, in fact they stand to one side of the organisational hierarchy and do not constitute a 'level' of organisation between the branches and the central institutions. The party's concern to preserve the status and autonomy of its branches has effectively checked any aggrandizement of power by the committees. In these respects the electorate committees of the Victorian Liberal Party contrast with the structures of the electorate level of organisation in most other parties. The Victorian committees, for example, have little in common with the 'strong and semi-autonomous electorate councils' of the N.S.W. Country Party, described by Aitkin;¹

¹Aitkin, Organisation of the Australian Country Party, p.229.

nor are they the equivalent of the electorate conferences of the N.S.W. Liberal Party which, as well as having an electoral function like that of the Victorian committees, are empowered to consider policy resolutions from branches and elect representatives to the party's governing body or State Council.¹ Their organisational status is clearly higher than that of the Victorian committees which, as constituted, are little more than cogs in an electoral machine, sometimes providing additional party roles for ambitious or enthusiastic activists.

¹The Liberal Party of Australia, New South Wales Division, Constitution, Parts VII and VIII.

CHAPTER 7

CENTRAL ORGANISATION

The party's organisational structure provides members with an opportunity to participate in a variety of political activities for a variety of rewards. Among the latter are the achievement-oriented satisfactions of rising in the party hierarchy to positions which, to varying degrees, entail a deeper involvement in party affairs, confer prestige and endow a sense of responsibility or of wielding influence. This chapter turns from the highly differentiated structures within the electorates to the central institutions that comprise the 'managerial' level of organisation - the State Council and the State Executive.

STATE COUNCIL

Formal Structure

The State Council is potentially a vast gathering of over 800 activists and parliamentarians. It is made up of two representatives (one man and one woman) from each branch, all state and Victorian federal parliamentarians, twelve representatives of the Young Liberal Movement, and all members of the State Executive.¹

Constitutional Position

The Council is officially the most authoritative body in the

¹Constitution, 1965, Clause 31. In 1968 there would have been approximately 833 persons at the Council's meetings, had all attended who were entitled to do so. This number comprised 736 branch representatives, sixty-two state parliamentarians, twenty-three federal parliamentarians and twelve Young Liberal representatives.

party. Clause 33 in the constitution states succinctly that: 'The Council shall be the governing body of the Party, and shall determine the Platform and Policy of the Party'. Clause 40 then stipulates that: 'The State Parliamentary Party shall be responsible for the implementation of the Party Platform and Policy decisions of the State Council'. Clearly, therefore, the Council's authority is intended to extend to both the organisational and the parliamentary sections of the party.

Its constitutional role of 'governing body' is sanctioned by the party's belief in democratic principles of organisation. This has been stated by a senior member of the Executive in a form with which party members in general would agree at least in principle:

In a democratically based and democratically governed party, where the emphasis is on the control of the organisation by the members it is inevitable that the sovereign power is placed with State Council.¹

The predominance of branch representatives in the present structure of the Council therefore stems from a doctrine of membership control of the party. The Council's composition also reflects a conception of the party as a single, unified structure:

There is only one political unit, and all, whether they be members of the Branches or Members of Parliament, are members of it. All are represented on or are members of the State Council. The point of emphasis is that there is only one Party, all are members of it although in practice they carry out their work in different spheres. The State Council is the governing body - not of the Organisation or of the Parliamentary party separately - but of the whole unit...²

¹Minority Report of State Council Resolutions Sub-Committee to State Executive, 3 July 1959.

²Relations Between the State Parliamentary Party and the Organisation, Report of Joint Standing Committee on State Policy to State Executive, 3 July 1959.

The decisions of the State Council are authoritative, according to this view, because its composition is fully representative of the two basic elements of the party - the ordinary members (through their branches) and the parliamentarians.

Because of the importance of the Council in the formulation of party policy, the development of its role in this field will be discussed more fully in Chapter 13. The present chapter is concerned primarily with the internal structure of the Council, a factor which greatly affects the performance of its policy making and other functions.

The Council in Action

The Council meets in Melbourne twice yearly - in February or March, and again in July or August for the annual meeting and the election of office bearers and the Executive. This has been the practice for many years, although the Executive has power to call meetings whenever they are required. Machinery also exists for the Council to be convened at the request of fifty or more councillors.¹ The last procedure has never been resorted to, and the only occasion when the Executive has called a special Council meeting was in February 1949, in order to ratify the formation of the Liberal and Country Party.

Council meetings normally last for two days and one evening and are held in the middle of the week, a time which might appear inconvenient, but which, in fact, is preferred by most of the branches. In 1951, 1958 and 1963, the Central Office conducted surveys of branch

¹Constitution, Clauses 36, 37.

opinion as to the most popular days for holding Council meetings. Each time a majority of the few branches which bothered to reply favoured the status quo.¹ More recently, in 1966, the Council voted against a motion which advocated the holding of weekend meetings.²

Except on rare occasions, the Council's sessions are open to the press and public.³ This has good propaganda value in terms of the party's self-image as a democratic organisation with 'nothing to hide'. But the public is too busy to attend, and during most of the sessions the gallery of the Presbyterian Church Assembly Hall in Collins Street contains only a few small groups of party members, mainly women.

Despite the potential size of the Council, a meeting is well attended if there are 400 persons present. On most occasions a count finds between 150 and 300, for branch representatives and parliamentarians come and go throughout the proceedings.⁴ A small attendance is deplored by the keener party members, who feel that it detracts from the status of the Council and compromises the representative principle on which its role as governing body is based.⁵ In 1962 the state president wrote to all

¹SC, 31 July - 1 August 1963. A great majority of the branches also prefer the holding of meetings in Melbourne (ibid., 1-2 March 1957).

²Ibid., 23-4 February 1966.

³Some sessions of the Council were held in camera in 1952 when the party was involved in a serious internal dispute over electoral reform. Again, in 1954, the Council was closed to the press and public when motions calling for the readmittance of the expelled Hollway group were discussed.

⁴A quorum is 100.

⁵Reports of delegates to their branches in Minutes of Greensborough branch, 2 March 1953; Minutes of Kew North Branch, 6 April 1962.

branches whose delegates had not been present at the previous Council meeting, emphasising the importance of a full attendance:

You will agree that in the formulation of policy by the State Council it is desirable that all areas within the State be adequately represented, so that the policy decided upon represents the considered views of the whole State.¹

Although sanctions against absenteeism among branch representatives have been suggested, they have never been seriously considered by the Executive.² In this, as in other areas of organisational activity, the party is permissive.

The constitutional structure of the Council is modified in practice by the differences in attitude and behaviour among party activists that account also for the great variety of types of branches. Many branches, as has been suggested in the previous chapter, although formally in existence, are not active enough to find persons prepared to attend the Council. Other branches are content to be represented by only one councillor, sometimes according to a pre-arranged roster of their committee members.³ To offset problems of attendance, stemming among other factors from the mid-week timing of the Council and the apathy of many members towards the Council's activities, the branches are entitled to nominate up to four proxy delegates - two men and two women - as substitutes for their two 'main' delegates. Thus up to six members

¹Letter, H.W. Snell to Apollo Bay branch (in the minute book of that branch).

²Special Report of Agenda Committee to State Executive, 4 June 1965.

³Minutes of Kew South East branch, 18 August 1958; 16 February 1959.

of a branch may attend the Council with full speaking and voting rights, provided that not more than one man and one woman are present on the floor of the meeting at any time. The limitation of proxy delegates to four was only recently introduced on the recommendation of the State Executive,¹ its object being 'to ensure more interest in and knowledge of the work of the Council by regular attendance by approximately the same people'.²

Branch representatives comprise a large and heterogeneous component of the Council. Delegates arrive at its meetings with different attitudes towards it, some naively idealistic, others remarkably cynical about its value and the conduct and nature of its proceedings. It is not an élite institution: the political knowledge and skills of the councillors range from the superior to the frankly mediocre. Some are there simply to perform a duty to their branches; for others the furthering of their careers within the party is a major motive.

Nonetheless, the several hundred branch delegates (or proxy delegates) do not comprise an unstructured mass. As the Council works through its agenda of branch resolutions, a pattern of participation which distinguishes the informed, the articulate and the ambitious from the indifferent or passive delegates soon emerges. Most councillors assume the role of 'adjudicators', taking no part in the affairs of the Council other than deciding which way to vote or whether to abstain on several score of diverse resolutions. Their branches have usually left them free on most issues to vote according to their own judgement after they have

¹SC, 23-4 February 1966.

²SE, 9 July 1965.

listened to the course of the debate and observed the response of others around them.

A much smaller number of delegates is cast in the rather different role of 'persuaders'. Their participation in the Council's business is enlivened by an informed interest in party policy and often fired by political ambition in the form of a desire to attain party or public office. To win or retain a place on the State Executive, for example, requires a delegate to attract the favourable notice of his fellows. This may also stand him in good stead in any future bid to gain pre-selection as a parliamentary candidate. As a group, 'persuaders' possess and exercise superior political skills to those of the average councillor. They are better informed and speak with a practised confidence which can often be traced to experience at the Bar, in the Board Room or Municipal Chambers, or to membership of the Liberal Speakers Group or Rostrum.¹ Most of the dominant personalities of the Council are well known to delegates and induce predictable responses; but unknown speakers add welcome interest to the proceedings: necks crane as the delegates are evaluated in person as well as by their microphone style and the content of their contribution. There is continual human interest in the meetings of the Council.

Divisions in the Council along 'left' - 'right' or 'liberal' -

¹ 'Rostrum is for those who desire to advance themselves in the mastery of the art of Public Speaking, and who hold that Freedom of Speech, Loyalty to Truth, Clarity of Thought, and a love of the English Tongue are vital elements of that art..' ('Objects' in Syllabus, Victorian Rostrum Dais).

'conservative' scales form and re-form over different policy issues. Stable groups are difficult to discern in a party which enjoys a high degree of social and ideological cohesion. Policy preferences and styles of activism often appear to stem as much from generational differences among the representatives as from the presence of any more ideologically based groupings within the Council. In the words of a perceptive journalist, one must distinguish the 'middle-aged ladies' and the 'old Tory males' from

a substantial number of articulate and well-informed young men in their twenties [who] know their politics well and have little in common with the Tories. They are concerned with social reform, rational economic planning, defence, destroying the 'White Australia' policy as it stands, and with the latest techniques for winning elections.¹

The relationship between the parliamentarians and the non-parliamentary members is an important aspect of the structure of any major political party. This division is clearly evident at the State Council, despite the party's claim that it consists of 'one political unit'. Given the electoral success of the party at both state and federal levels, parliamentarians now number over eighty members of the Council. A block of seats is reserved for them at the front and to one side of the main body of the delegates, a physical separation which is a fitting symbol of the politicians' distinctive role in the Council - and in the party in general. Another manifestation of this is their irregular attendance at

¹Brian Buckley, 'The Young Turks', Bulletin, Vol. 88, No.4487, 5 March 1966, p.16.

the Council, a fact which has drawn some criticism from members of the organisation.¹ Parliamentarians, especially ministers, participate selectively in the business of the Council, although by the time it is over a big proportion of them will have put in an appearance for at least part of the meeting. Certainly, the prolonged absence of a parliamentary member without good reason would be noted unfavourably by representatives from branches in his electorate and others. While on many occasions the parliamentarians' places are nearly deserted, on others they are fully occupied as members crowd in for the election of the State Executive or as the time approaches for the Council to debate especially contentious items of policy. At the Council meeting of February 1968, for example, resolutions concerning the re-endorsement of sitting members, the appointment of an ombudsman and abortion law reform attracted between thirty and forty parliamentarians.

When the politicians do attend en masse their vote, which is usually a fairly solid block vote, can determine the outcome of a resolution - especially when absenteeism or abstentions among the branch delegates reduce the number voting to under 300, as is often the case. Thus in 1959 the parliamentarians almost certainly caused the defeat, by 138 votes to 110, of a motion which pointedly reminded M.P.s that the State Council was the party's policy-making and governing body.² While

¹E.g., 'In the opinion of the Committee more Parliamentarians should attend State Council and a Minister should be present for resolutions appearing in the Section dealing with his Department' (Special Report of Agenda Committee, 4 June 1965). See also, SE, 13 July 1962.

²Age, 20 August 1959; Herald, 19 August 1959.

parliamentarians can be expected to vote on matters affecting their relations with the organisation, and generally also to support a viewpoint expressed by a minister on an issue, they often abstain from voting on other resolutions.

Many members of parliament and activists alike regard the Council as primarily a forum for the expression of branch opinion. Accordingly they believe that the politicians should 'interfere' as little as possible in its proceedings. It is therefore the practice of parliamentarians to participate in the Council's debates with deliberate restraint and in accordance with recognisable conventions. The voice of a state backbencher is rarely heard; ministers (or their delegates), however, are careful to attend at the time specified on the agenda for the discussion of resolutions concerning their departments. Since such motions often imply, even if they do not overtly express, criticism of government policy, the ministers' statements are often defensive in tone and intent. They are concerned to justify the status quo, provide an explanation of what is already being done or is about to be done by the government, or give a frightening estimate of the cost involved if the resolution before the Council were to be implemented. A favoured tactic employed by ministers is to furnish the Council with 'additional information' relating to a resolution, with the object of encouraging the branch delegates to see the matter from the government's point of view, and to vote accordingly. But perhaps the most effective approach of all was that of the Minister for Education who, concluding his remarks with the words 'You

name it and I've got a shortage of it', immediately won the good-humoured sympathy of the councillors.

The manner and tone of a minister's statements are qualities of special importance in the interaction of the parliamentary and non-parliamentary members of the Council. A lapse into parliamentary aggressiveness is clearly inappropriate, and a minister loses ground by appearing to resent the Council's actions; but his case is even more likely to be lost if he implies that the issues raised by a policy resolution are too broad or complex to be determined by the Council. Such an implication is certain to be seized on by an articulate branch delegate who champions the policy-making role of the Council. Most rank-and-file councillors strongly resent the suggestion that, as a group, they are not competent to reach a decision on some matter.¹ After all, they are members of the party's governing body.

While some hold the view that parliamentarians should intrude as little as possible in the business of the Council, it has been argued on the contrary that, in their official role as councillors, members of parliament have an obligation to play a more active part in its decisions - by attending the Council in greater numbers for a greater proportion of the time, and by speaking for or against resolutions more often. Those who subscribe to this view argue that it is preferable that branch

¹This factor was observed by the writer to contribute to the outcome of a debate on a resolution calling for abortion law reform, at the Council meeting in February 1968. In opposing the motion, the Attorney General was tactless enough to give councillors the impression that he thought the matter too 'big' to be decided at a State Council meeting. Although the minister was supported in the vote by approximately forty parliamentary members, the motion was carried.

delegates reach decisions on resolutions knowing 'the facts or considerations available to the parliamentary members', than that resolutions dealt with on the basis of limited information should 'be ignored if they are passed'.¹

Notwithstanding their limited participation, the parliamentarians are an influential group in the State Council. They possess many of the political skills and resources which count on the floor of the meeting: they have prestige, they are articulate and can present a well-prepared case and, if necessary, they can back it with formidable numbers in a vote. As a final resort they have the state parliamentary leader who intervenes in the business of the Council on rare issues of special importance for the parliamentary party or the government.² In 1965, for example, Bolte, under pressure from the Country Party, sought the dropping of the name 'Liberal and Country Party' and a return to the party's plain, pre-1949 title of 'Liberal Party'. On this occasion he made doubly sure of winning the approval of the Council by reading a letter of support for the proposal from the Prime Minister. The Council voted overwhelmingly in favour of the change of name.³

Yet the parliamentarians do not control or dominate the Council, which is by no means always a compliant body: it can pass one resolution

¹Minority Report of State Council Resolutions Sub-Committee, July 1959.

²Although the three leaders of the federal parliamentary party - R.G. Menzies, H.E. Holt and J.G. Gorton - have been Victorian M.P.s, they have addressed the Council only in a formal capacity as guest speakers and have otherwise remained aloof from its proceedings.

³Australian, 25 February 1965.

against a minister's better judgement as easily as it rejects another on the basis of his opposition. Moreover, rank-and-file councillors feel a sense of corporate identity and purpose which may be directed against the parliamentarians. In 1959, for example, by 146 votes to 119, the Council censured the state and federal parliamentary members for accepting a salary rise 'in spite of the overwhelming wishes of party members and the adverse reaction of the Australian people'.¹ Again, in 1965, the Council censured the state government for its poor record in education policy.²

How important for the party are the policy decisions of the State Council? The simple answer is that, as indicated by the pattern of participation in the Council's business by the parliamentarians, they are very important. It is the object of ministers in particular to influence the views of branch representatives on specific policy matters as much as possible without antagonising them. If the outcome of the Council's deliberations mattered less, one would expect from the parliamentarians a less structured, less restrained and more casual style of participation or, more likely, a greater tendency simply to ignore the institution.

Members of the State Council are involved in four activities: debating resolutions, electing the State Executive and party office bearers, receiving annual reports from the state president and the chairmen of the Women's Section and the Young Liberal Movement, and hearing

¹Age, 20 August 1959.

²Australian, 27 February 1965.

addresses by prominent parliamentarians or party leaders.

The debating of motions on party policy and organisation dominates the business of the Council. In July 1967, at a typical annual meeting, when reports are received and elections held, the Council dealt with resolutions for eleven out of its fourteen hours in session; and at an ordinary meeting of the Council in February 1968 this increased to thirteen out of fourteen hours. Undoubtedly the main function of the Council is to enable the branches to express opinions and to suggest ideas which, if accepted, become 'officially' a part of state party policy. In 1963 the Council itself reaffirmed that its purpose is 'to give expression to the views of Branches'.¹ For this reason it first relegated to the end of the Council and then abandoned an experimental procedure whereby parliamentary members answered questions which were left in a box by delegates. For the same reason reports and addresses have been reduced to a respectful minimum. Pressure of business leaves little time for speeches by party notables and the Council as a result is remarkably and mercifully free from the expression of party clichés. Branch delegates resent activities which unduly cut across the 'real business' of the Council. Even so the Council is usually unable to consider all eighty to 100 resolutions contained on a normal agenda. Unresolved items from the previous meeting are given priority at the next - but only if the branches concerned re-submit them. In an attempt to keep the Council's agenda down to a manageable length, a rule was introduced in 1966 which limited branches to a maximum of four resolutions

¹SC, 31 July - 1 August 1963.

each;¹ and a further restriction, introduced in February 1969, has limited each branch to a maximum of one 'primary resolution' (as nominated by the branch) and two 'secondary resolutions'. Primary resolutions are to be dealt with first by the Council, and secondary resolutions in any time remaining.² Both limitations were introduced reluctantly, because they were regarded by some as contravening basic party doctrines by restricting the branches' 'democratic' right to influence party policy; but others countered that only by refining the procedures employed by the Council could it hope to maintain its credibility as an authoritative institution.

The agendas for the Council's meetings are drawn up by a standing sub-committee of the State Executive. It groups resolutions into a number of categories according to the level of government or the governmental department to which they refer, and sets a specific time for the Council to deal with this section.³ This procedure is designed mainly to enable the relevant ministers to be present at the time when motions dealing with policies concerning their departments are debated. The Agenda Committee may omit from the agenda resolutions which merely restate party policy, repeat the substance of a resolution determined by the previous Council, or are still under consideration by the State Executive or the party's

¹Ibid., 23-4 February 1966.

²Agenda Paper for State Council, 26-7 February 1969.

³E.g., 'Resolutions - Federal, 7.15 p.m. - 9.50 p.m.'
'Resolutions - Chief Secretary, 2.45 p.m. - 4.10 p.m.'
'Resolutions - Health: 4.10 p.m. - 5.30 p.m.', etc.

federal bodies. The Committee is also entitled to append factual explanatory notes to resolutions, but not to indicate any attitude towards their content.

Nonetheless, there is some evidence that the Agenda Committee performs a watchdog role on the nature of the resolutions that are submitted for debate at the Council, and on rare occasions will intervene to persuade a branch to withdraw an especially contentious motion. Such a case occurred in 1965, when the Committee drew the Executive's attention to a branch resolution intended for the next Council meeting. The Executive resolved (with one dissentient) that the president confer with the office bearers of the branch concerned 'with the view to having the resolution either withdrawn or altered'.¹ The branch replied to the Executive that it could not call a general meeting in time to again discuss the resolution before the Council was due to meet.² However, as there is no record of a resolution from the branch in the minutes of the State Council's meeting, it is highly likely that the motion was either among the ten to have been withdrawn with the consent of the Council or the fifty-one branch resolutions not dealt with through lack of time.³

Assessment

The conduct of the Council reflects its role as the party's governing body. It is also an expression of the middle-class social norms and values embedded in the party. 'The Liberal way' (a common phrase among

¹SE, 4 June 1965.

²Ibid., 9 July 1965.

³SC, 28-9 July 1965.

older activists) as it is evidenced at the Council's meetings is, on the whole, orderly and reserved. Yet as well as acting as a deliberative body, the Council also takes the place of a party conference or convention.

The Victorian Division holds no party convention as such. The State Council is the most inclusive gathering of activists and parliamentarians officially provided for. Counting proxy delegates, the number of participants in a State Council meeting comprise a significant proportion of the party's nucleus of active members. Not surprisingly, therefore, the Council legitimately performs certain symbolic and ritualistic functions for the party. It reaffirms basic loyalties and contributes to the maintenance of party cohesion; occasionally an issue and sometimes a delegate's rhetoric, touching on a fundamental Liberal value, arouse the councillors to an expression of emotional solidarity. At the Council, branch activists can observe prominent party identities in action: names become faces and voices; the Council provides members with an experience that deepens their sense of involvement in and identification with the party as a whole; at Council meetings the parochialism of the branch and electorate levels of organisation is broken down. Finally, the regular, twice-yearly dispatch to all branches of agendas and memoranda concerning the State Council helps in a practical way to keep the branches functioning between elections. Perhaps more than is realised, the State Council is an indispensable institution for the maintenance of the party's extra-parliamentary organisation as it exists at present.

The party's abiding problem is to reconcile the authoritative

constitutional role of the Council with the kind of institution it in practice is. It is a problem which most bothers those who champion the Council's, and ultimately the branches', part in the formulation of party policy. Such activists are concerned that many of the attributes of the Council (or rather councillors) limit its prestige and credibility as the party's governing body. It is 'alarming', one wrote, 'to observe the poor attendances, the inadequate attention to debate, the generally ill-informed state of many delegates who have come to determine major issues'.¹ Similarly, in discussions with branch members and within the pages of minute books, one finds constantly expressed a discrepancy between the Council in theory and the Council as it may be observed in action. Members' praise of the democratic organisational principles embodied in the Council is often offset by the variety of criticisms they heap on it.² But there is little the party can do effectively to improve attendances or the standards of debate at the Council, or to lessen the number of branch resolutions dealing with matters of trifling importance. These things are inherent in the nature of grass-roots political activity. The functioning of the Council must be reconciled with them. We have seen, moreover, that the rules and procedures governing the Council are continually under review and being adjusted to enable it to function more effectively. Also, the Executive has been prepared to resist practical

¹Liberal Speakers Group, Survey of Organisation, 1965.

²E.g., Minutes of North Camberwell branch, 2 September 1957; Minutes of East Kew branch, 14 March 1961, 30 April 1962; Minutes of Kew North branch, 6 April 1962; Minutes of Box Hill North branch, 29 April 1960; Minutes of Camperdown branch, 22 April 1960.

suggestions which run counter to the theory on which the Council is based. If the Council is to perform its role as a policy-making body, it is desirable that councillors come to the meeting well prepared to reach informed decisions on the varied matters before them. On this ground the Executive rejected a branch delegate's plan for tabulating the resolutions on the agenda in a way which, he argued, 'would save [delegates] the trouble of plowing (sic) through the Agenda to find the matters of particular interest'. The Executive replied firmly that it was 'the duty of every delegate and every Branch to study every Resolution on the Agenda so that delegates come to the Council as informed as possible'.¹

Clearly, there is ground for conflict between the Council's constitutional authority as a policy-making body and the traditional and even more the practical autonomy of the parliamentary party in determining policy. As a senior member of the party has noted:

Some Parliamentarians regard the State Council as an 'outside body' and therefore of no consequence to members of Parliament; others regard the State Council as unreasonable and irresponsible in its decisions; some State Council members regard Parliamentarians as too inclined to by-pass or ignore State Council...²

Although there is this tension between the Council and the parliamentary party, and although the Council's prestige is limited by its own character, its authority has not been eroded and indeed is continually reaffirmed by those who regard it as necessary for preserving

¹SE, 8 July 1966.

²Minority Report of State Council Resolutions Sub-Committee.

a form of intra-party democracy. In the words of the same member:

The impetus of the Party derives from giving the rank and file, democratically chosen, the power of controlling the Party's destiny. It is not unreasonable that, having given liberally of time, energy and fortune the rank and file will expect compliance with policy decisions by those who are the Party's workers in Parliament.¹

The party functions on the understanding that a formal sovereignty and, to some extent, real authority reside in the Council.

STATE EXECUTIVE

Although the State Council is formally the party's governing body, the Executive makes most of the decisions and carries out most of the activities associated with that role. With the assistance of the permanent paid staff, the Executive runs the organisation, and the Council ratifies the Executive's work. Meeting monthly, or more often if necessary, the Executive operates under the following broad constitutional brief:

[It] shall conduct the business and affairs of the party in conformity with the spirit of the Policy and the Platform of the Party and shall have such powers and functions as are conferred upon it from time to time by the State Council.²

A glance at the constitution shows that the powers which the Council has permanently conferred on the Executive are indeed extensive. They include control over the establishment of branches, the expulsion or suspension of members, granting or withholding the endorsement of candidates,

¹Ibid.

²Constitution, Clause 43 (i).

selecting candidates for the Senate, and involvement in a wide range of organisational and policy-making activities.

The Executive is a powerful body whose actions are not noticeably constrained by the superior constitutional status of the Council. The relationship between the two was well summed up, if unintentionally, by a prominent office bearer and member of the Executive for sixteen years who once bluntly told the Council that: 'The Executive did what it is empowered to do, and [that] is an end of the matter'.¹ Indeed, the influence on the State Council of the Executive collectively and of its individual members, is at least as great, if not greater, than that of the parliamentarians. Resolutions originating in the Executive are invariably carried by the Council; and the attitude of the Council to many others, especially on organisational matters, is determined when an Executive member speaks.

As in the previous section on the State Council, the aim here is primarily to describe the character of the Executive, allocating to later chapters discussion of the part it has played in specific areas of party activity.² The leadership role of the Executive having been indicated, it is relevant to ask such questions as: who are elected to it; how are they recruited; and how is the Executive organised to carry out its role in the party?

¹Age, 2 March 1961.

²See especially Chapters 9, 11, 13.

Composition and Election

In its formal composition the Executive (including office bearers) is in many ways a miniature version of the State Council. Its members are drawn from the rank and file organisation, the state and federal parliamentary parties and the Young Liberal Movement. At full strength it numbers fifty-six members with an additional one or two immediate past-presidents of the party who are ex-officio members for three years. Forty-five of the Executive's members, including the state president and four vice-presidents, are elected by the State Council from its non-parliamentary members. The Council also elects the treasurer, though he need not be one of its members. The Central Committee of the Young Liberal Movement appoints four adult members. Six places are reserved for parliamentarians - three being for state members, one of whom must be the state parliamentary leader, and three for federal Victorian M.P.s, including the federal leader or his official appointee. Selection of the parliamentary representatives is left to the respective parliamentary parties.¹

The organisational doctrine of equal representation of men and women applies throughout the Executive, with the exception of the office of president. In addition there must also be equal representation of country and metropolitan branches.² Thus the four vice-presidents and the forty ordinary members are elected by separate ballots according to

¹ Constitution, Clause 42.

² Ibid., Clause 32.

four categories: metropolitan men, metropolitan women, country men and country women. The four Young Liberal members must likewise conform to these categories.

The election of the Executive is the high point of the August meeting of the State Council. Branch delegates and parliamentarians crowd in in greater numbers than for any general item of Council business. Personalities rather than policies are involved; interest is enlivened, and there is an air of excitement in the Assembly Hall. Moreover, the stakes are high, for a place on the Executive is coveted by the most active and often the most politically ambitious party members. It is important, therefore, if suspicion of dubious practices and disputed results is to be avoided, that the machinery of nomination and election be regarded by all concerned as fair and legitimate. The entire procedure is now governed by detailed rules and unwritten norms. Only accredited branch delegates to the Council (and not proxy delegates) may be nominated for a place on the Executive. Nomination forms are sent to all branch secretaries by Central Office at least three months before the Council meets, and nominations close on a specified day four or five weeks before this date. Each nominee is entitled to outline, in not more than fifty words, his credentials as a prospective Executive member. This information is sent to branch delegates along with the agenda for the Council meeting. Ballot papers are prepared at the Council meeting and the order of the names of candidates is determined by lot. As a further gesture of impartiality, the names of retiring members of the Executive are no longer

distinguished in any way, on the ballot paper, from those of new candidates.¹ A separate ballot paper is drawn up for each of the four categories of Executive member. The ten candidates in each category who receive the highest number of votes are elected.²

The success or failure of a candidate may be determined in a close vote by groups which form vague, but acknowledged, bases of support within the Council - the Liberal Speakers Group, the Young Liberals, the Women's Liberal Club, the members of the retiring Executive. The influence of these as well as of prominent persons cannot be shown with any precision, but they have a place in members' accounts of elections to the Executive. Overt canvassing for support by individuals hoping to win election to the Executive is frowned on, as it is for candidates seeking pre-selection for a parliamentary seat. In 1959 an Executive member went so far as to table a notice of motion expressing the Executive's strong disapproval of 'systematic canvassing' of branch representatives at the Council. The motion was subsequently 'not put', but the sentiments underlying it still obtain.³ Covert lobbying, however, is still in practice.

Candidates for the Executive are evaluated by councillors according to general image criteria rather than policy considerations.

¹However, such information is readily available on the nomination sheets supplied to all councillors. These have appended a record of attendance at Executive meetings of the retiring members and office bearers.

²These rules were submitted to and ratified by the State Council of 28-9 February 1968. They codify what had become the practice over the years.

³SE, 11 September, 9 October 1959.

Candidates have no opportunity at the Council to make specific policy statements, nor to submit such statements with their written nominations. However, their attitude to a variety of questions currently attracting the notice of the Council usually will have been displayed during the course of a number of its meetings, though only on relatively uncontentious matters if the candidates are playing their cards cautiously. More important therefore for winning the votes of the councillors are such factors as: how well known a candidate is as a result of his previous organisational activities or perhaps prominence in one of the party's auxiliary bodies; whether or not his style of participation in Council debates creates a favourable impression among delegates; his suitability for a leadership role in the party as inferred from his personal and occupational attributes; and the extent to which he personifies the values and norms which are accepted and admired by middle-class councillors. The criteria for the election of women to the Executive is more mysterious and more independent of their roles at the State Council itself, for women participate in its debates much less prominently than men. But a clue to their recruitment is that twelve of the twenty-two women on the Executive for 1967-8 were active in the Women's Section of the party's organisation.

Table 7.1 shows the typical occupational distribution of men on the Executive. If occupation is regarded as an indicator of more general social characteristics, it is plain that the organisation is run by middle-class, usually upper-middle-class, activists. As was seen in the previous chapter, the social bias within the party begins in the

TABLE 7.1

OCCUPATIONS OF MALE EXECUTIVE MEMBERS 1965-8

Occupation	No. of Cases
<u>Grazier and Farmer and Grazier.</u>	7
<u>Other Primary Producers:</u> Farmers	3
<u>Law:</u> Barristers and Solicitors Solicitor	5
<u>Other Professions:</u> Architect, Public Accountant, Economist, Private Valuer	4
<u>Business and Finance:</u> Woolbroker, Company Director (3), Company Secretary, Company Manager	6
<u>White-Collar Workers:</u> Administrative Executive, Assistant Secretary, Executive Director, Insurance Agent	4
<u>Self-Employed, Small Businessmen, Shopowners:</u> Bus Operator, Real Estate (2), Managing Partner in a country newspaper, Newspaper Proprietor and Commentator	5
<u>Total</u>	34

Note: occupations are those of thirty-one men. Where members gave two occupations, both have been recorded.

Source: Nominations for State Executive, 1965-8.

branches, for enrolment of members and the maintenance of a branch structure most commonly occur in middle-class suburbs. The association between people with middle-class characteristics and the Liberal Party is even more accentuated within the Executive than at the electorate level of organisation. Recruitment to leadership roles is a selective process and on all counts - socially, ideologically and in the possession of political skills and resources - such upper-middle-class persons as businessmen and those in professional occupations frequently accord with a non-Labor leadership syndrome.¹

Political activists are frequent participants in community affairs and joiners of civic, charitable, occupational and other organisations.² The non-parliamentary members of the State Executive are no exception; in 1967-8 its forty-six members claimed affiliation with other organisations a total of 133 times;³ four of its members also had experience in local government. Participation by party activists in socially-approved community activities contributes to their personal prestige, adds to the accumulated political resources of the Executive, and strengthens the party's links with the community. In the latter respect, it is interesting to find the Executive, soon after the party was formed, stating the

¹ Cf. Blondel, Voters, Parties, and Leaders, pp.99-100.

² Milbrath, Political Participation, p.17.

³ Nominations for State Executive, 1967-8. It is of interest to note that whereas in a national sample of electors only 6 per cent of the respondents claimed to be members of three organisations (Australian Survey Project, see above, p.134, footnote 4), this number was the average for members of the Executive.

following as one of the party's 'principles of organisation':

The unobtrusive but active Party participation in all local affairs as the counter to lack of public interest in political affairs and as a means of identifying the Party with the everyday life of the community.¹

Men tend to be both more interested in politics² and more politically ambitious than women. Consequently, as Table 7.2 shows, considerably more men than women seek election to the Executive. But the most striking fact revealed by the table is the greater degree of competition for places on the Executive among metropolitan men than in any other category.

TABLE 7.2

NUMBER OF NOMINATIONS FOR EXECUTIVE
(Ten to be elected in each year from each category)

	Metropolitan Women	Country Women	Metropolitan Men	Country Men
1966-7	13	12	29	12
1967-8	13	14	24	15
1968-9	13	11	27	14

¹SE, 25 February 1947.

²In response to the question: 'How much interest do you generally have in what's going on in politics?' 62 per cent of men professed to have 'some' or a 'good deal' of interest, compared with 46 per cent of women (Australian Survey Project).

The unusual interest in party politics evident in this category of membership further helps to explain why, as indicated in the previous chapter, suburban branches as a group are more active and more policy-oriented than country branches. Were the metropolitan men not constrained by the constitution, one can envisage an Executive dominated by them, and a party organisation run from the middle-class suburbs.

Between 1945 and 1968, 208 different persons served on the State Executive.¹ Despite the party's organisational doctrine of equal numbers of men and women on the Executive, men (124) have outnumbered women (eighty-four) by nearly half as many again.

One explanation for this is that the doctrine of equality of the sexes stops at the vice-presidential level. So far, the offices of state president and treasurer have been 'reserved' for men. It is consistent with basic cultural differences in the political status of men and women that this should be so. But there is another reason: the roles of president and treasurer are key links between the party and another largely male reserve - the business world - which provides the party with a large proportion of its finance. Women rarely reach the top in either politics or business, and the party's structure reflects this. Moreover, the close tie between the two strategic offices of president and treasurer is evident from the fact that three of the five treasurers have been former state presidents.

A second reason for the long-term imbalance of numbers between

¹This does not include Young Liberal representatives or parliamentarians.

men and women Executive members is the fundamental inequality of their political roles in the community.¹ Parliamentary life in Australia is overwhelmingly male and Victoria, with only one woman among sixty-two state parliamentarians, conforms to the pattern. For many more men than women a place on the State Executive is a step towards parliament. Since the party was formed, over one-third of the men who have served on the Executive have contested parliamentary elections; and twenty-two have been elected, thus terminating their period on the Executive. By comparison, only three women have entered parliament from the Executive,² and one other has unsuccessfully contested a seat. Related to this, more women than men have remained on the Executive continuously for unusually long terms of office. In 1968 two women had held office since the party was formed twenty-three years before, and twelve others had served for fifteen years or more. The men cannot match this, only four having held Executive positions for fifteen years or more, one of whom interrupted tenure with a his term in the state parliament, while a second entered the Senate in 1968.

¹ Cf., Michelle Grattan, Women in Party Politics, B.A. (Hons) thesis, Melbourne, 1965, p.184:

'Until there are more women willing to compete with male actors according to the existing rules of the political game, and more who have the ability and qualifications to make an effective challenge... it is unlikely that women will have any greater success than in the past in obtaining top positions in Australian politics. In the long run preferential channels are useless, either for getting any number of competent women through to important political positions or for promoting good government.'

² Senators Marie Breen and Ivy Wedgwood, and Mrs. D. Goble, M.L.A. It is significant that two of these are Senators, since candidates on the party's Senate ticket are selected by the State Executive and not by a convention of branch representatives.

The typical member's tenure on the Executive is much briefer. Thus, 42 per cent of all Executive members have served for periods of one or two years only, and 70 per cent for five years or less. Comparing men and women again we find that the average length of office for men is 4.1 years, while for women, partly as a result of the long 'reigns' of a few organisational elders, it is 5.7 years. The turnover of Executive members has been remarkably constant since 1952 with between two and nine new members taking their places each year. Failure to win re-election rather than voluntary retirement is the main reason for members ceasing to serve on the Executive. For example, of the members in 1965-6 who did not remain in office, one entered parliament, two retired and four nominated for positions on the new Executive but were not re-elected. Of the latter, one had served eight years, another six, and the others two years each. In the following year the distribution was much the same: one member entered parliament, two retired and five failed to be re-elected after holding office for seventeen, ten, five, four and two years respectively.

This rate of turnover was even higher before 1952. After a large change of personnel between the first and second Executives, the beginning of a more stable pattern of tenure began to appear by 1948, when the number of new members dropped to seven. But the trend was interrupted in 1949 by the raising of the numbers of ordinary Executive members from thirty to forty, and then by the effects of intra-party conflict in 1950-1 and 1951-2 when respectively nineteen and eleven new members took their place on the Executive.

However oligarchic the functioning of the Executive, its structure is not notably so in one respect: judged by its members' tenure of office, self-perpetuation is not a marked quality of the Executive.

Organisation and Activity

The real elements of organisational oligarchy are to be found in the informal leadership structure which in personnel partly overlaps the Executive but includes also several former state presidents, party 'elders' and the general secretary. This informal structure, however, coincides to a large extent with the President's Standing Committee,¹ the composition of which has varied, but always includes the president, the four vice-presidents and the chairman of the Women's Central Committee, while the state parliamentary leader, his deputy, and two federal M.P.s are co-opted when matters concerning the politicians are under discussion. Essentially a 'crisis' body, it meets as events dictate or to perform tasks specifically delegated to it by the Executive - such as the last-minute endorsement of parliamentary candidates for industrial seats.

Basic to the functioning of the Executive is the grouping of its members into a number of sub-committees dealing with aspects of organisation and party policy. By this means the work of the Executive is geared to the special interests and talents of its members. Members indicate their order of preference as to which standing committees they wish to act on and, as far as possible, no member is appointed to more than two of them.²

¹Also sometimes known as the Emergency Committee.

²SE, 13 August 1965.

When the party was first formed the Executive supervised the expansion and activities of the non-parliamentary organisation through committees concerned with election campaigns, branch development, public relations, finance, women's and junior members' activities and amendments to the constitution. But this emphasis on organisation has declined. Even the Branch Development Committee, customarily the largest of the Executive Committees, went out of existence for several years in the early 1960s. Maintaining the electorate organisation became largely a decentralised function, and the Executive has come to specialise increasingly in policy-making activities - stimulated by the state parliamentary party's continuous tenure of office since 1955.

Since 1961, most of the Executive's work has been channelled through a number of standing policy committees, the personnel of which include the state ministers whose portfolios embrace the subjects dealt with by the respective committees.¹ In addition, in 1968, the State Council approved a branch resolution which provided for the appointment of party members from outside the Executive to serve on the policy committees for which they have special qualifications.² Before implementing this resolution the Executive laid down certain conditions: the outside appointments were to be limited to two per committee and ^{were} to have no

¹They are: Rural Committee, External Affairs and Defence Committee, Health Committee, Trade and Economic Affairs Committee, Justice and Social Welfare Committee, Transport and Communications Committee, Education Committee, Housing Committee, Labour and Industry Committee, Chief Secretary's and Attorney General's Committee.

²SC, 28-9 February 1968.

voting rights; a committee's recommended appointees were to be approved by the whole Executive; and the term of appointment was to be for not more than one year.¹ While admitting that the organisation's policy-making machinery should tap the best resources available, Executive members are inclined to be jealous of their responsibilities, and of the privileges and prestige that are the rewards of a hard-won place on the Executive.

In addition to the policy committees, three standing committees on organisational matters currently exist - the Constitutional Committee which examines/proposed alterations to the constitution and frames any necessary amendments for submission to the State Council, the State Council Agenda Committee, and the recently-revived Branch Development Committee. The latter, a much smaller version of the original committees, was set up in 1965 under a specific term of reference: 'to devise ways and means of building up the weaker Branches throughout Victoria'.² In 1967 the general secretary was sceptical of its usefulness and it appeared to be in virtual abeyance.

When necessary, the work of the standing committees is supplemented by the formation of ad hoc committees to examine specific organisational problems or policy matters. Thus such diverse subjects as: milk pasteurisation, compulsory voting, mental hygiene, youth problems, organisation within the trade unions, the alcoholic content of beer, death duties and

¹SE, 10 May 1968.

²Ibid., 10 December 1965.

the activities of the Communist Party have been probed by special committees.

All committees report regularly to the Executive, usually at every second or third of its meetings; most table their reports at one meeting for inclusion in the minutes and discussion at the next. Over a wide range of party affairs, therefore, the collective decisions of the Executive are based on the recommendations of its sub-committees which, in their respective fields, constitute the organisation's main centres of decision making.

As part of the process of keeping the Executive informed, reports on state parliamentary affairs are also received at less regular intervals from the joint state policy committee and from the Premier or his deputy. The regular attendance of the Prime Minister's representative and federal parliamentary delegates ensures that there is a viewpoint on federal matters, and both state and federal parliamentary representatives may be questioned on a variety of topics.¹

An important function of the Executive is to link the state party organisation with the main federal bodies. For this purpose the constitution requires the Executive to appoint from the State Council seven

¹A typical list at one meeting of the Executive included the following: statements on Vietnam by Prime Minister and President Johnson; Minister of Agriculture's speech at rural conference; Martin Report on education; compensation for persons injured by criminal delinquents; voluntary recruits in the armed services; appointment to the Grain Elevator Board; eligibility of war nurses for war service homes; adoption centres at hospitals; attendance by Minister of Agriculture at Rural Committee; Commonwealth - state relations, press secretaries for state ministers; constitutional changes by referendum; appointment of more women to various boards (ibid., 9 April 1965).

delegates to the Federal Council.¹ In practice the Executive appoints seven of its own members. This has become a fairly standardised procedure:² there is an unbreakable convention that the delegates will comprise four men and three women, and will include the state president, the parliamentary leader and the chairman of the Women's Central Committee. The men's positions are open for election and three or four senior members usually compete for them. However, besides the president and parliamentary leader, the remaining two positions are normally filled by the two male vice-presidents, though on a few occasions a former state president has secured election. The four men are elected separately from the three women who 'have their own practice as to who will represent them';³ but the women's delegation also invariably comprises senior Executive members.

There is little deliberative participation by the State Executive in the affairs of the federal organisation. The Executive as a whole, for example, does not discuss the agenda of the Federal Council. It is the usual practice for the delegates to support all motions sponsored by the Victorian organisation and then to vote on those from other states according to their own judgement. Subsequently, the state president delivers to the Executive a comprehensive verbal report on the deliberations of the Federal Council. Occasionally, the Executive may be required to ratify a decision by the Federal Council.

Verbal reports are also received on the business of the other

¹Clause 44 (a).

²The following account is based on information provided by a former senior member of the State Executive.

³Ibid.

federal bodies - the Executive, Joint Policy Committee, Rural Committee and Staff Planning Committee.¹ The object of these reports is almost solely informative, and in delivering them the state representatives 'are expected to exercise prudent discretion'.² Although questions may be asked of the delegates and the contents of the reports occasionally debated, unlike reports from the sub-committees of the State Executive, they are not a basis for decision making by that body. Nonetheless, Executive members expect to be kept informed on federal matters. They are aware that they occupy a place at the centre of the party's organisation, and that on the basis of their own political skills and resources, as well as the extensive constitutional powers of the Executive, they exercise a leadership role within the party.

¹This comprises the six state and the federal general secretaries. Its proposals are usually submitted to the Federal Council.

²SE, 29 January 1960.

CHAPTER 8

AUXILIARY ORGANISATIONS

Political parties, as Eldersveld has said, are typically 'clientele-oriented' structures.¹ They aim to attract the support of as many different groups as possible within the electorate, which is thought of as comprising numerous (and often overlapping) categories of voters, such as home owners, Catholics, 'new' Australians, country voters, trade unionists, women, young voters -- the list being infinitely flexible. To bid for the votes of such varied groups, parties compile comprehensive election programmes. They also attempt to show their concern for the interests of different sets of voters through general party activities. For example, in a later chapter, the extent to which the Liberal Party's organisation is oriented towards the country voter will be shown.² As a second example, in 1962 a sub-committee of the State Executive devised a 'Programme to attract community groups to the Liberal Party'.³ The committee's idea was that the party should try to discover 'the unifying or motivating thought of particular groups' and link these wherever possible to the party's platform and programme.

Sex and age are two factors which provide a basis for divisions within all communities. They structure organised activity of many kinds: an array of youth groups and women's organisations is a familiar feature

¹Samuel J. Eldersveld, Political Parties: A Behavioral Analysis, p.68.

²Chapter 12, pp. 353-9.

³SE, 11 May 1962.

of our social order. The Liberal Party conforms to this general pattern and has associated with it separate organisations for women and for young persons.

People become politically active from a variety of motives, and derive from their participation different personal satisfactions. Primarily they join a party because they can agree (however vaguely) with its political objectives. Through their association with the party they are rewarded by a sense of furthering these objectives. Such 'purposive' rewards for joining parties may be reinforced or even virtually replaced by the 'solidary' or social rewards that are to be gained from taking part in their activities.¹ Like other voluntary organisations, political parties offer their members amounts of fun and companionship.

It is the function of the Liberal Party's two main auxiliary organisations - the Women's Section and the Young Liberal Movement - to attract greater numbers of people into the ambit of the party by emphasising the 'solidary' rewards of participation. Both of these groups divide their programmes between political and non-political activities. Thus, electioneering, policy discussions, and political education are filled out with social events and charitable, community and sporting activities.

Both the Women's Section and the Young Liberal Movement have formal organisations which are largely separate from that of the main party, but they are tied to the party in four ways:

¹Peter B. Clark and James Q. Wilson, 'Incentive Systems: A Theory of Organizations,' Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol.VI, September 1961, pp.134-6.

(1) by having a common political objective which is summed up in the platform of the party; (2) by overlapping memberships; (3) by constitutional links; (4) by sharing clerical and administrative facilities.

THE WOMEN'S SECTION

No other state Division is as self-conscious about the place of women in Liberal Party politics as the Victorian Division. Men and women are equally represented in elective offices at almost all levels of the organisation, the exceptions being the positions of president and treasurer. The reason for the Division's relatively feminist structure is historical: equal representation was the bargaining point on which the influential Australian Women's National League undertook to disband and merge with the newly-formed Liberal Party in 1945.¹ The women's organisation was constituted in December 1945.

Organisation

Individual women's sections have been formed within some of the stronger party branches, especially in the most Liberal-inclined suburbs. More usually the sections are formed from among branch members within a state electorate.² Neither the constitution nor the Women's Section's by-laws stipulate a minimum size of membership for individual sections, though the approval of the Central Committee of the women's organisation is necessary before a local section may be formed. Women members of party

¹Letter, F.J. Davis to writer, 8 July 1968.

²In 1962 a clause to this effect was added to the party's constitution.

branches may participate in the activities of any sections in their electorate, but they have voting rights in only one section.¹ In 1968, sixty-one sections were functioning throughout the state. Most of these were in the metropolitan area and the remainder were in larger country centres. As with other sections of the party, the women's groups have not regained the scale of their organisation in the peak years of 1948-9, when over ninety groups existed.²

The co-ordinating body for the women's organisation is a Central Committee consisting of three delegates from each section, and ex officio the two women state vice-presidents of the party, the immediate past chairman (earlier chairmen may also attend by invitation), and Victorian women parliamentarians. This body elects a chairman and two vice-chairmen; the permanent organising secretary of the Women's Section acts as secretary for the Central Committee. The Central Committee, comprising an average of 100 delegates, meets monthly from March to December in order to be addressed by a prominent party speaker, hear the inevitable reports of sub-committees and arrange inter-section activities.³

Activities and Role

The activities of the Women's Section are slanted strongly

¹Victorian Division, Organisation Series, Women's Sections By-Laws, Clauses 2 and 3.

²Report of Central Committee of Women's Sections to State Executive, 28 October 1949. (No separate membership figures are kept for the Women's Section.)

³Annual Report of Central Committee of Women's Sections, 1967-8.

towards charitable and philanthropic action. Indeed, it is a cultural norm that the community expects women to be interested in these matters.¹ Thus a typical report from the Central Committee to the State Executive referred to the Section's members helping to raise money for Wattle Day and for the Spastic Children's Appeal, and to a donation from the Section to Poppy Day.² Similarly, the annual report of the Women's Section for 1967-8 indicated that donations of sums varying from twenty dollars to nearly 300 dollars had been given to U.N.I.C.E.F., the Royal Women's Hospital, the Victorian Arts Centre, the British Commonwealth Day Movement and 'sundry small donations to other charitable appeals'.³

In the Women's organisation, therefore, the boundary between party and community activities is sometimes blurred. Apart from giving money to various causes, the Central Committee nominates delegates to a number of non-political societies having unexceptionable aims, with which it is affiliated. Such societies are the Australia Day Council, the British Commonwealth Day Movement, the Good Neighbour Council of Victoria, the National Council of Women of Victoria, the Travellers' Aid Society and the United Nations Association.

With respect to political activities, it is widely acknowledged within the party that its women members undertake a disproportionate share of the routine tasks associated with an election: according to long-established custom, the folding and delivery of manifestos, the arranging

¹Cf. Norman Mackenzie, Women in Australia, Melbourne, 1962, pp.269-70.

²Report of Central Committee to State Executive, 16 December 1954.

³Annual Report of Central Committee of Women's Sections, 1967-8.

of postal votes and the staffing of committee rooms fall largely to their lot.¹ Much of this activity is undertaken by the women through their own branches, but the Women's Section also helps to reinforce the party's campaign activities in marginal and Labor-held 'industrial' electorates, where the local organisations are weak.² In addition, it provides extra help for the campaigns of women candidates - who are usually prominent members of the women's organisation. From time to time, special rallies are arranged for the purpose of winning favourable publicity for the party, and to enable the women to demonstrate their loyalty and enthusiasm for 'the Liberal cause'.

Like other sections of the party, the women's organisation attempts to influence the formulation of policy. Policy submissions from individual sections are examined by the Central Committee and, if approved, may be forwarded to the Federal Women's Committee or channelled through the State Executive to appropriate ministers or to the state policy committee. The great majority of resolutions relate to health, education, housing and the general interests of women, children and consumers, that is, to areas of social policy in which women are conventionally considered to have a special competence.

The stated purposes of the women's organisation within the party are threefold: to support the aims and objectives of the party; to inform it of the women's viewpoint; and 'to afford special opportunities

¹Victoria is not unique in this: cf., Frank Stacey, The Government of Modern Britain, Oxford, 1968, p.57.

²E.g., Reports of Central Committee to State Executive, 15 November 1963; 8 May 1964.

for Women to gain political knowledge'.¹ In pursuing the last two aims, a number of sub-committees have been formed within the Central Committee. In 1968 there were separate committees for education, health and social services, housing, immigration, economics and international affairs.

As one might expect, many of the activities of the women's organisation reveal marked feminist attitudes in its concern to advance the place of women in society and politics. Thus, on behalf of women in general, it presses for their representation on the appropriate boards, committees and commissions dealing with aspects of social policy, and supports women's jury rights. Typically, the annual conference of the Women's Section in October 1967 was on the theme of 'Women of Achievement'; and in the same year the election to parliament of Mrs. K.G. Goble, M.L.A. (Mitcham), was lauded by the vice-chairman of the organisation thus:

We are now tremendously thrilled in congratulating her on her election. [Her] success can be taken as a symbol of the increasing importance of and recognition given to women in politics generally— but in particular in the Liberal Party.²

The Women's Section provides a separate, hierarchical, status structure within the main party organisation. Occupying offices in the women's organisation and achieving prominence in it has helped individual women to rise in the party. In particular the office of chairman carries prestige and wide involvement in the party's affairs; for it is an aggregative role: the chairman is also the Victorian delegate to the

¹Women's Sections By-Laws, p.1.

²Victorian Liberal Leader, No.9, May 1967, p.10.

party's Federal Council (and hence also a member of the State Executive). Office in a section is virtually a prerequisite for a woman to win election to the State Executive. An overwhelming proportion of the women in the metropolitan area who nominate for positions on the Executive are usually members of its Central Committee. The same generalisation does not apply with equal force to women living in country electorates, however, as they do not have the same opportunity to join a women's section as their city counterparts. While the rule of equal representation of men and women in the State Executive guarantees women a certain number of places in the higher levels of the party structure, it is participation in the Women's Section that helps to determine who will occupy these places. Like any elective organisation it is in this sense a power base for those who like to use it as such.

When party members speak of 'the role of the women' -- as they commonly do -- they refer not only to the distinctive slant that we have noted in the women's political interests and activities, but to their overall influence in party affairs, an influence based on equal representation throughout the main party structure and the existence of an active auxiliary organisation. What is implied is that women's political attitudes are sufficiently different from men's to affect the nature of party decisions. Thus certain State Council resolutions are commonly said to have been defeated (or passed) on 'the women's vote',¹

¹E.g., the passing by the State Council in 1956 and 1958 of resolutions calling for the abolition of live-bird trap shooting has been cited as such a case.

and a similar explanation is given for the success (or failure) of individual candidates for the Executive or for pre-selection. It is difficult to separate myth from reality and prejudice from objectivity in such assertions, but since the leading members of the Women's Section meet regularly, it would be surprising to find that they did not co-ordinate their views on some questions (and personalities) and influence the views of their followers. The structural basis is certainly there for women activists to achieve the degree of cohesion which may be decisive in determining the result of close decisions. There can be little doubt that there are cases of decisions within the party's organisation in which women have been specially influential. One should not, for example, overlook their achievement in preserving a position in the party which by no means all of the men agree with. Doubtless also the approximate parity of the women's voice with that of the men in the State Executive helped Senators Ivy Wedgwood and Marie Breen (both chairmen of the Women's Section) to win their places on the party's Senate ticket. Again, it is widely said that women were mainly responsible for retaining the party's membership fee at a minimal level for so long.¹

Moreover, there are perceptible differences between men and women in their attitude to political party activities.² Women are, above

¹The writer's observation of a debate over an increase in the membership fee in the State Council in 1968 is consistent with the last allegation. Three out of four speakers opposing an increase in the subscription were women, while all three supporters of the change were men.

²Cf. some of the findings of M. Kent Jennings and Norman Thomas, 'Men and Women in Party Elites: Social Roles and Political Resources', Midwest Journal of Political Science, Vol.XII, No.4, November 1968, pp.469-92.

all, more party-oriented; their activism consists in performing tasks 'for the party' or 'to further the Liberal cause'.¹ Women's political activities are alloyed with personal ambition far less than are men's, and their view of politics is less cynical. Their dedication to the party is expressed also in a concern for the observance of accepted party norms and procedures, and in deference to constituted authority, especially in the persons of the parliamentarians and the state president. In this regard, some would claim that, because of the number and role of women in the party's structure, its extra-parliamentary wing is more subdued in relation to the politicians than it might otherwise be; but the point must remain conjectural.

In a cultural environment in which politics is generally thought of as a man's vocation, not even the doctrine of equal representation of men and women in the party's elective structure can ensure that they play equal parts in it. There is a division of roles within the party even when the rules do not prescribe it. As indicated in the previous chapter, the office of state president is in practice reserved for a man; there are no women on the State Finance Committee; candidates' campaign chairmen are hardly ever women,² although they act as campaign secretaries as

¹This attitude is expressed among women spontaneously in conversation and writing. E.g., the 1967 conference on 'Women of Achievement' was described by the chairman of the Section as 'an excellent opportunity for a wide representation of members to meet in the name of the party' (Annual Report, 1967-8, emphasis added).

²E.g., in the 1964 state elections, fifty campaign chairmen were men and only two were women.

often as men.¹ Finally, although there are approximately equal numbers of both sexes in the branches, the higher officers in the local organisation - the branch presidents, the electorate committee chairmen and the personnel of the finance committees - are far more likely to be men than women.

Equal representation thus protects the women's opportunities for participating at all levels of the organisation from being encroached on by the men, but this has not apparently changed the women's perception of their role in politics. They do not, for example, seek selection for parliament any more than in other states where their place in the Liberal Party is less favourable. Despite the legend of the A.W.N.L. and the device of equal representation, in Victoria, women play predominantly traditional and culture-bound roles in the party. It is their place to present a woman's point of view in certain policy areas, and to continue to carry out many of the chores of election campaigns.

THE AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S LIBERAL CLUB

Formerly the Australian Women's National Club, this admirable institution for middle-class ladies was inherited by the Liberals when the A.W.N.L. merged with the party in 1945. Though, like all clubs, it has a social function, its wider role in party affairs has been summed up by an Executive sub-committee thus:

¹E.g., twenty-six men and twenty-five women in 1964.

It has provided a meeting place for women [notably the leading activists in the Women's Section] where political subjects can be discussed informally and where members can inform themselves and keep up to date in Party matters. It must be remembered that women have far less opportunity to meet in those circumstances than men. The Club has also provided a convenient meeting place for other groups and organisations within the Party, where meetings can be held in a central and easily accessible location in congenial surroundings...¹

Until 1959, the State Executive and many of its committees met in the A.W.L.C.'s rooms at Howie Court, Collins Street. Since then these activities have been transferred to the rather bleak Executive room at the Central Office in Queen Street. Membership of the Club has decreased. After reaching approximately 2,000, shortly after the party was formed, and remaining high for ten years, the number of members declined to about 450 in 1965 and 380 in 1967. Since the mid-1950s, increasingly heavy subsidies from the party have been necessary to keep the Club running.² Although the A.W.L.C. has earned a place in the annals of the party, its importance appears to be waning. As the report quoted above concludes:

with [the Club's] present reduced membership, and the limited use being made of its facilities by existing members, its efficacy as an integral part of the Party organisation is considerably restricted'.³

¹SE, 12 March 1965.

²In 1967 the grant amounted to \$2,000 (ibid., 3 November 1967).

³Ibid., 12 March 1965.

THE YOUNG LIBERAL MOVEMENT¹

Organisation

For a minimum of one dollar a year, young persons from sixteen to thirty years of age can join the Young Liberal Movement (Y.L.M.). In country areas this upper age limit is extended to thirty-five years. This broad definition of 'young persons' has been defended on the grounds that most active Young Liberals over twenty-five are, in fact, also members of senior branches and, secondly, that it is in the interests of the party for politically inactive members of the movement at least to enjoy their social and recreational activities within a Liberal influence. Young Liberals, therefore, are not obliged to join the senior party, though adult members of the movement are naturally urged to do so. Age is not the only criterion for membership. Like the senior party, the Y.L.M. may exclude from itself those who are members of proscribed parties or organisations.²

The basic organisational framework of the movement is broadly comparable to that of the senior party. At electorate level clubs form the primary units of organisation. A club having ten or more financial members is entitled to elect three delegates (including one man and one woman wherever possible) to the governing body of the movement - the

¹Between 1949 and 1965 the movement's official title was Young Liberal and Country Movement. For convenience, only the current title has been used in the text.

²This and all subsequent references to the formal structure and procedures of the movement are based on By-Laws of Young Liberal Movement of Australia (Victorian Division), promulgated 29 May 1967.

Central Committee. This, in turn, elects from among its own members an Executive of nineteen, which is responsible for the running of the movement. The Y.L.M. does not emulate the senior party's strict rule of equal numbers of men and women in elected offices: only three places on the Executive are reserved specifically for women - a deputy chairman and at least two of the ordinary members.

The organisational structures of the senior party and the movement are formally linked by an exchange of representatives. The Y.L.M., as we saw in the previous chapter, is represented on the party's State Council and State Executive. The State Executive, in turn, nominates two of its senior members to act as delegates to the movement's Central Committee and Executive.

The party's constitution specifies the number of representatives that the movement is entitled to send to the State Council and State Executive, and the Y.L.M. in its by-laws lays down additional rules governing the composition of its delegations to these bodies. Thus, the Young Liberal representatives must be adult members of the Central Committee of the movement, and must also belong to a senior branch of the party; delegates to the State Executive are automatically also delegates to the State Council; the movement chairman is ex officio a delegate to both bodies. He is also the movement's representative on the party's Federal Council. The rules thus set up a number of overlapping offices which are occupied by leading activists in the movement. The chairman and his three co-delegates to the State Executive, as well as holding office in the movement, are also branch activists and members of State

Executive and State Council.

The interlocking of the two organisations in this way ensures that the leaders of the Young Liberals gain experience and status in the senior organisation as well as in the movement. The leadership positions of the Y.L.M. have therefore acquired a strategic value for their incumbents in relation to the senior party. As a result, the movement not only recruits new members into the branches of the party, but it functions also as a route for accelerated promotion into the party's higher organs. Young Liberal chairmen, in particular, have a strong chance of winning election to the State Executive on their retirement from office in the Y.L.M.: six of the eight chairmen between 1956 and 1966 have done so, while a seventh disqualified himself by becoming a state parliamentarian. Only one former chairman has nominated for the Executive but failed to gain election. The most spectacular case of a Young Liberal chairman rising in the party is that of Andrew Peacock, M.H.R., Sir Robert Menzies' successor in the federal electorate of Kooyong. Peacock was chairman of the Y.L.M. in 1962-3, metropolitan vice-president of the senior party in 1963-5 and state president (at the age of twenty-eight) in 1965-6, resigning the latter office to contest the Kooyong by-election in April 1966.

The Y.L.M. is not a large organisation: in September 1968 it had approximately 1700 members distributed among forty-nine clubs. The movement's structure is influenced by much the same environmental and organisational factors as affect the senior party. Like the latter, the Y.L.M. is a middle-class-based organisation, with most of its members and

clubs in the wealthier suburbs and very few in the 'industrial' Labor-held electorates. In 1968 only six clubs were functioning in the latter areas. Unlike the senior party, however, the Y.L.M. has relatively few clubs outside the Melbourne metropolitan area. In 1968 there were only fourteen,¹ The movement has always faced a severe problem of resources and staff in attempting to develop a country structure, despite the assistance it receives from senior party organisers. Nonetheless, it is the current policy of the movement to expand its country organisation. To this end, in 1966, it introduced a system of regional councils which, it is hoped, will help to stimulate and co-ordinate the activities of the otherwise rather isolated country clubs.²

Relatively few clubs appear to enjoy a stable existence,³ and in this respect the movement faces more severe problems of organisation than the senior party. The Young Liberals experience the difficulty common to all parties of enrolling members, and more especially of finding sufficient numbers of activists. But an additional problem is that their organisation is based on the most geographically mobile section of the population. Many members are lost to their clubs through travel overseas, movement of residence or preoccupation with establishing their homes and families. Furthermore there are rival organisations, like the Junior

¹The movement classifies all clubs which are more than twenty-five miles from the centre of Melbourne as 'country clubs'.

²Chairman's Annual Report to Central Committee, 1966.

³Between 1956 and 1959, for example, a total of thirty-one clubs was disbanded (Minutes of Young Liberal Executive Committee, 10 August 1964).

Chamber of Commerce and the Young Farmers' Clubs, which recruit members primarily from the same age group and social strata as the Young Liberals and offer fairly similar social incentives for joining. Merely holding the movement steady in size therefore requires constant recruiting activity. Nevertheless, in recent years, largely as a result of vigorous leadership of the movement and a determined effort to increase its membership, assisted by the greater interest in and wide publicity given to youthful activity in politics,¹ the Y.L.M. has been more successful than the senior party in raising its membership above the level of the trough in numbers which both organisations experienced during the early and mid-1950s.²

On the basis of trends in the size of its membership (Fig.8.1), there have been four clear stages in the organisational history of the Y.L.M. They are: (1) rapid expansion to 1950, (2) sharp decline, 1950-53, (3) stagnation, 1953-9, (4) recovery since 1959.

In 1948 and 1949 the Y.L.M. shared the benefits of the senior party's inflated financial resources, large number of paid organisers, and the general upsurge in non-Labor political activity at this time. According to one source the movement was provided with 'a paid full-time secretary, an assistant secretary and a small staff of organisers'.³ In addition, the movement's country membership, again like that of the senior

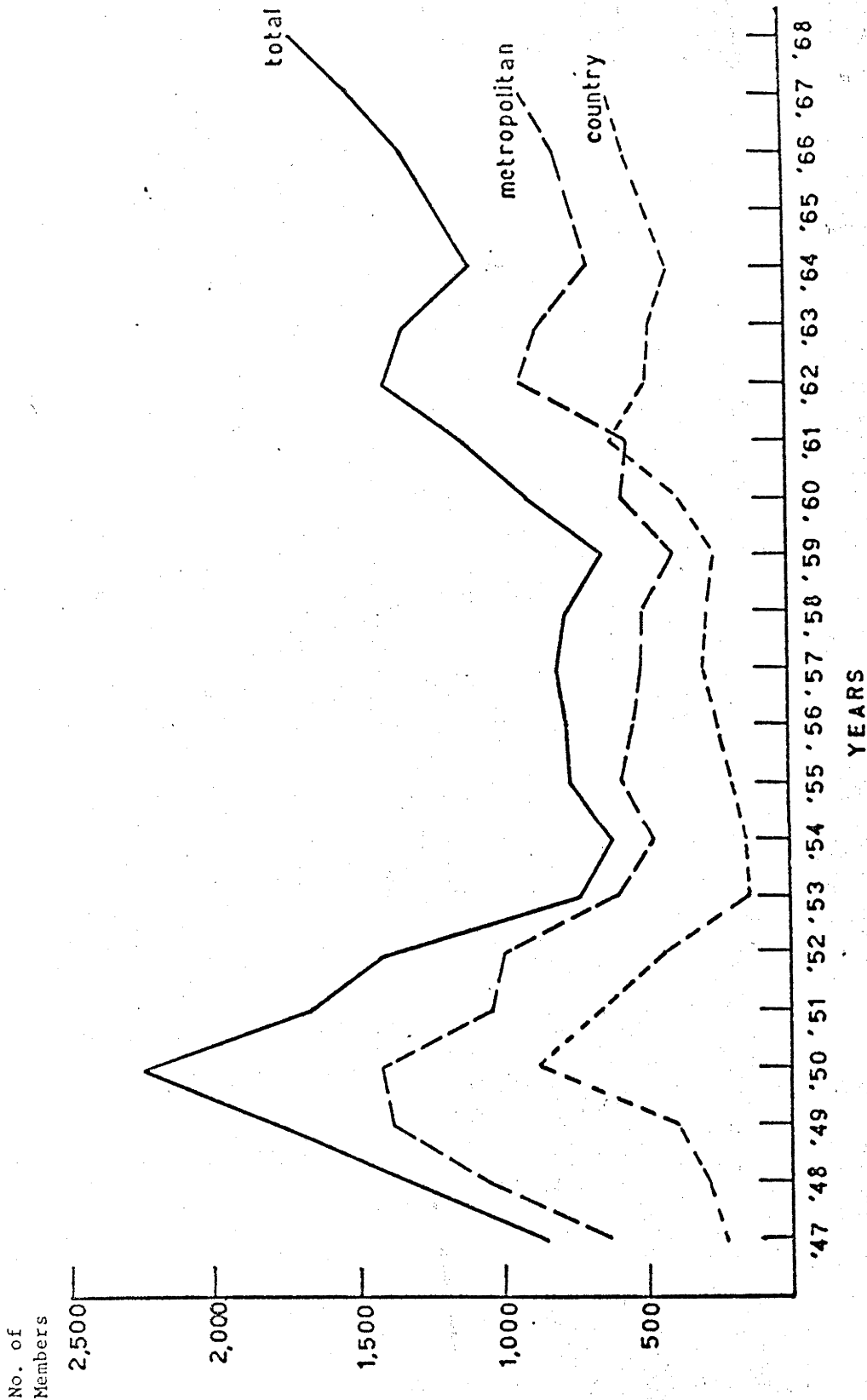
¹The Andrew Jones (elected Liberal M.H.R. for Adelaide, 1966) phenomenon and campus political activities are but two variants of this.

²Cf. Fig. 8.1 with 5.1, p.123, above.

³Alan Scanlan, M.P., 'Young Liberals on the March', Liberal Leader, November 1967, p.5.

FIGURE 8.1

MEMBERSHIP OF YOUNG LIBERAL MOVEMENT 1947-68.



Source: Data supplied by Young Liberal Movement.

party, received a minor boost in 1949 by local rebellions within the Country Party. By mid-1950, the Y.L.M.'s membership had reached a peak of over 2000. Then, in the general organisational retrenchment which the party underwent in 1950-1, the movement's staff was cut to one full-time secretary. The memberships of both the party and the movement began to fall as rapidly as they had risen in the preceding years. At the same time relations between the party and the movement turned sour over a major policy disagreement.

In 1951 the federal Liberal-Country government called a referendum seeking constitutional power to dissolve the Communist Party. Contrary to official party policy, the annual conference of the Y.L.M. advocated a 'no' vote in the referendum.¹ Although this was narrowly rescinded by the movement's governing body (then known as the Co-ordination Council),² a significant and articulate section of the Young Liberals continued to oppose the party on this issue. The split within the movement, and between movement and party, widened when A.J. Missen, a vice-president of the movement, published his views in the Argus, intimating that he was by no means alone in his disagreement with party policy:

What I now write is an expression merely of personal opinions, but they are also as I well know, views that have the support of many members of the Young Liberal and Country Movement, the University Liberal Club, and other Liberal groups.³

Worse still in the eyes of the party, the leader of the Opposition,

¹Argus, 12 June 1951.

²Ibid., 22 August 1951.

³Ibid.

Dr. H.V. Evatt, speaking in Adelaide the next day, used the letter as evidence of a Liberal 'revolt against totalitarian proposals'.¹ It was like 'a stab at the heart of the Prime Minister', a Liberal branch delegate told the State Council soon after.² At a meeting of the State Executive that evening, Missen was censured and suspended from office in the movement.³ This did not end the matter: ten Young Liberals, most of whom were members of the Co-ordination Council, immediately sent to the press a further letter setting out the arguments against the referendum.⁴

In the event, Victoria recorded a 'no' vote, thus contributing to the defeat of the referendum.⁵ Whatever the contribution of the dissident Young Liberals to this result, the incident aroused bitter feelings towards the movement among senior party activists who accused the Y.L.M. of, among other things, spending the party's money 'without doing a spot of work'.⁶

During the referendum issue, the movement showed signs of assuming an independent and somewhat militant role in party affairs. In October 1951 the Co-ordination Council resolved:

that the movement should advocate and stimulate a spirit

¹Ibid., 23 August 1951.

²Ibid., 31 August 1951.

³SE, 30 August 1951. The suspension was lifted in March 1952.

⁴Age, 1 September 1951.

⁵Victoria was one of the three states which returned a majority for the 'no' vote. For a full account of the referendum campaign see Leicester Webb, Communism and Democracy in Australia, Melbourne, 1954, pp.145-9.

⁶Young Liberal, Vol. V, No.3, June 1952, p.6.

of enquiry and criticism and independent thinking amongst its members in order that they may develop their own ideas and be encouraged to express them. To this end the Council urges that member Clubs should discuss critically the policy of the Party with a view to substaining a programme at once progressive and practical.¹

But that was not the role expected of them. As a party delegate had told the State Council at the height of the dispute: 'unity is loyalty... at the first sign of disloyalty we must act'.² Accordingly, a sub-committee of the State Executive was set up to enquire into the organisation of the movement. It did its job searchingly and unsympathetically, accusing the Young Liberals' Executive and Council of failing to carry out the main purpose of the movement which, as stated in the latter's own handbook, was inter alia to support 'the objects and policy of the Liberal Party of Australia' and to foster co-operation and understanding between the movement's clubs and the party's branches.

As one result of the enquiry, the headquarters of the movement were transferred to the party's Central Office and publication of its magazine was discontinued to help reduce the overhead cost of the movement to the party, which at that time was approximately £3,000 per year.³ In addition, several drastic amendments to the structure of the movement were proposed. The most threatening was the recommendation that it should be dissolved as a separate organisation and that its members should be absorbed into the senior branches. But in negotiations with the State

¹Minutes of Co-ordination Council, 23 October 1951.

²Argus, 31 August 1951.

³SE, 6 June 1952.

Executive, the Young Liberals successfully resisted this and also an alternative move to lower the upper age limit of members from thirty to twenty-five, a change intended to weaken the leadership of the movement. The Executive finally compromised by amending the party's constitution so that Young Liberal clubs were to be attached to a senior branch.¹ This rule was never strictly followed, however, and was dropped in 1965.

The Y.L.M. thus survived the period of crisis, its structure fundamentally unchanged, but with its reputation tarnished and the senior party in no mood to help the movement alleviate its organisational problems. The Young Liberals' requests for a country organiser for the movement drew no apparent response from the party.² Admittedly, at this time, the party itself was hardly in a position to spare the resources of staff necessary to check the movement's decline of membership, but strained relations between the organisations undoubtedly made the party less willing than in later years to back the movement. As a result, by 1953, the Y.L.M. had almost ceased to exist outside the Melbourne-Geelong metropolitan area.

The movement's membership remained critically small between 1953 and 1959, especially in the country. But during this time its relationship with the party was repaired. There were no new policy disputes and, at leadership level, the movement seemed anxious to avoid them. Militancy had been discredited.

By 1957 there was talk of a new 'sense of purpose' in the movement.³ This manifested itself most clearly in the expanding election

¹ Constitution of Liberal and Country Party, as amended 2 March 1960.

² Minutes of Young Liberal and Country Movement Executive, 12 March 1952.

³ Chairman's Annual Report to Central Committee, 1956-7.

activities of the movement, a trend which the general secretary of the party encouraged.¹ It could be detected also in the wider programme of general club activities that the movement's Executive had begun to organise.² But beneath the leadership group, the movement still lacked organisational depth and vigour. Membership actually declined further in 1958-9, to within only eight of its lowest number ever. By now, however, the Y.L.M. had sufficiently recouped its position in the party to receive the latter's support in an attempt to begin reviving the movement's club structure. With the help of senior party organisers a move was initiated to build up the country membership.³ In subsequent years the campaign was extended to the suburbs where, in 1960-61 especially, recruitment drives helped to boost the metropolitan clubs' membership.⁴

The revival and growth of the Y.L.M. has continued through the 1960s. During this time it has diversified its activities and, above all, has been moulded by successive chairmen into an effective electoral adjunct to the senior party. Organisational activity is the hallmark of the movement in the 1960s - as is appropriately summed up in the Y.L.M. slogan: 'Young Liberals Mean Action'.

¹SE, 21 February 1958.

²Chairman's Annual Report, 1956-7.

³Minutes of Central Committee, 27 October 1958.

⁴E.g., see reports of Young Liberal Movement to State Executive, SE, 17 June 1960; 17 March 1961.

Activities and Role

The Y.L.M. offers its members four kinds of 'action' -- political, social, charitable and sporting.¹ It thus fully achieves the typical aim of such party auxiliary groups of combining social with political (i.e. purposive) rewards for membership.

The movement's political activities fall into several categories, namely, party policy, political education, publicity, and electoral activities. The Y.L.M., like all other sections of the party, contributes to the babel of intra-party policy discussion. Policy resolutions which originate in clubs and at movement conferences are directed to the Central Committee. If passed as official 'movement policy' by that body they are sent on to the State Executive, which may in turn allocate them to the relevant Executive sub-committees or forward them to the State Council for ratification as party policy. Characteristically, many of these policy resolutions have a mildly liberal-progressive flavour, but it would be misleading to regard the Y.L.M. (as some of its members like to think of it) as above all composed of the 'Young Turks' of the party. For some

¹A brochure entitled 'Who are the Young Liberals?' advertised the following list of activities in 1968:

Political : conferences, public speaking courses, prominent guest speakers, debating competitions, political rallies, leadership training courses, candidature at elections.

Social : cocktail parties, theatre parties, balls, barbecues, beach days, annual revues, dinner dances.

Sporting : ski-ing weekends, ten pin bowling, squash, tennis, football, car trials, water ski-ing.

Community Services: painting homes for the aged, taking orphans on outings, reading for the blind, chopping wood for pensioners, assisting local charities, buying a bed for a hospital, giving aid to Asian countries.

years, it seems, the movement's leaders have been too engrossed with their own political advancement to wish to encourage the Young Liberals to assume such a role.

Political education and the development of political skills are catered for through a programme of conferences which are addressed by ministers, party elders or suitable outside 'experts'.¹ In addition the movement holds training courses in 'leadership', 'politics and management' and public speaking, and arranges such activities as a model parliament and inter-club debating. The educative function of political parties is thus, in the case of the Liberal Party, more evident within the Y.L.M. than the senior organisation.

The publicity value for the party of many of the Young Liberals' activities is also greater than that deriving from the activities of the senior branches. In particular, the major events of the annual 'Young Liberal Week' - a rally, a ball and a beauty contest - can be expected to feature prominently in the mass media.

By far the most important category of political activity is the movement's electoral role. This in turn has two aspects, the mobilisation of Young Liberals during an election campaign and, secondly, the recruitment of movement members as party candidates. In both cases the Y.L.M. works in close liaison with the senior party. It is a well-established custom that the movement supplements the senior party's electoral organisation - especially in the 'industrial' electorates. The Liberal Party

¹E.g., in 1965-6 there were one-day or weekend conferences on three separate themes: 'National Development - Northern Issue', 'Liberalism', 'Australia's Future in Asia'.

boasts that it contests all Labor-held seats, but it would be hard-pressed to do so without drawing on the resources of the Young Liberals.

The movement's electoral activities played an important part in its revival in the late 1950s, by assisting it to reclaim its status in the eyes of the senior party. This is clearly borne out by the increasing number of Young Liberal candidates in state and federal elections since 1955. In that year two candidates were endorsed, and the senior party began to encourage the movement to take a greater part in campaigns. In 1958 four Young Liberal candidates were selected to contest seats in the state elections and two in the federal elections. In the latter, the senior party delegated to the Young Liberals entire responsibility for the conduct of the campaign in the Labor-held electorate of Scullin -- in which one of their own members was the endorsed candidate.¹

Enthusiasm does seem to be increasing', reported the Young Liberal delegate to State Executive.² It was, indeed, for sixteen members of the Y.L.M. were endorsed as candidates for the 1961 state elections, among them the movement's chairman, A.H. Scanlan, who won the seat of Oakleigh from its Labor incumbent. Three other members contested federal electorates in the same year. At every election since then the Young Liberals have provided a substantial number of candidates: eight were endorsed in the 1963 federal elections and five in 1966, while thirteen contested at state level in 1964 and eight in 1967. The movement supports its

¹Annual Report, 1958-9.

²SE, 9 May 1958.

candidates with financial grants from its own fighting fund,¹ and clubs provide enthusiastic manpower for assistance during the campaign.²

Given generational differences in attitudes and mores, naturally not all the activities and viewpoints of the Young Liberals are approved of by older members of the party,³ while others also regard the parliamentary or organisational aspirations of some movement members as somewhat precocious. Nonetheless, few would deny that the Young Liberals contribute significantly to the strength of the party's organisational resources and to its pursuit of a self-image as a progressive and relevant political force in the eyes of the 'young voter', a category whose importance is now recognised by all parties. Nor would senior party members wish to deny the value of the Y.L.M. as a recruiting ground for future activists and politicians.

THE LIBERAL SPEAKERS GROUP

One of the themes running through this account of the organisational structure of the party is that the nature of its institutions and the way they work are largely a function of styles of activism; that is,

¹E.g., in 1964 grants of between thirty dollars and eighty dollars were allotted to Young Liberal candidates (Minutes of Central Committee, 22 June 1964).

²E.g., see M. Stockdale, 'Marketing a Candidate', Politics, Vol.II, No.2, November 1967, pp.229-44.

³The Young Liberal Rally in 1966 was described by one senior observer as 'a noisy American-style convention...The Rally was in favour of Mr. Holt's style in the U.S. Mrs--- reported that Sir Robert's style was missed' (Minutes of Kew South East branch, 11 July 1966).

such constitutionally similar structures as branches or electorate committees may be differentiated among themselves as a result of the varied political skills, motives and ambitions possessed by the activists running them. Many members are content for years to belong to branches which do little more than carry out the routine electoral tasks expected of them. Others, more ambitious, more deeply partisan, or for other reasons possessed of an unusual interest in party politics, may find the branches and electorate committees a less satisfying milieu. Yet besides these local structures there are limited opportunities for participation. The State Council meets only twice a year, and there are limited places on the State Executive. Thus, within the party's basic framework, there is room for an institution (rather like the Young Nationalists of an earlier period) that caters for the 'upper level' of activists. The Liberal Speakers Group (L.S.G.) performs this role. It is an élite structure with many of the attributes of a club: its membership is fairly homogeneous, entry is somewhat selective and restricted, and the Group has a strongly-developed sense of its identity and role within the party; it is egotistical in outlook.

The L.S.G. restricts its membership to men, and its constitution provides for only seventy-five active or full members. A prospective member must be proposed by one of the Group. Before his membership is accepted he is interviewed by its committee. Successful applicants are then admitted to a waiting list to become full members of the Group as vacancies occur. At any time there are usually twenty-five to thirty approved applicants on the waiting list. Although not full members, and

so denied voting rights in the Group, the approved applicants may otherwise participate in all its activities. The Group's effective membership is thus 100 to 110. The membership fee has always been high by party standards - twenty shillings a year in 1951, thirty shillings in 1961 and ten dollars since 1966. Unlike the party's main auxiliary organisations - the Women's Section and the Young Liberal Movement - the L.S.G. is not a 'clienteled-oriented' body intended to attract more people towards the Liberal Party. It recruits from those who are already active within the party and who desire to develop their political skills or covet the prestige (real and imagined) and the greater sense of involvement in party affairs that membership of the L.S.G. confers. Party activists seek to join the Group, it does not canvass for members - though on occasions individuals who have impressed members of the Group may be invited to apply for admission.

A typology of activists would reveal a relatively small group (numbering perhaps several hundreds), the members of which each occupy a number of offices within the party's organisation - just as they are also likely to be frequent joiners of organisations besides the Liberal Party. The L.S.G. has attracted many such prominent activists. In the words of one of its recent annual reports, 'all members of the Group are invariably key men in their electorate'.¹ In 1966-7 the Group numbered among its members seventy-five state councillors, thirteen of whom were also members of the State Executive.² In addition the last seven chairmen of the Young

¹Annual Report of Liberal Speakers Group, 1966-7.

²Ibid.

Liberal Movement have been admitted as members of the Group.

Politically ambitious activists often join the L.S.G., which has thus assumed an important place in the recruitment of parliamentary members. In this respect it tends to duplicate the role of the Young Liberal Movement in providing a pool of willing members from which the party can draw candidates for even the most unwinnable industrial seats. Before the 1964 state elections, the general secretary of the party requested members of the Group to nominate as candidates. Six submitted their names in response to this appeal.¹ In 1966, twenty-four state M.P.s were then, or had been, members of the L.S.G. Seven of its members won endorsement in the federal elections in the same year, and fourteen in the state elections in 1967.² As stated in the previous section of the chapter, however, seven of the latter candidates were also prominent Young Liberals, indicating once again the tendency for leading activists to occupy overlapping roles in the party.

The general activities of the Group are carried out within the framework of five objectives. They are:

To promote the philosophy, objects, policy and platform of the Liberal Party of Australia.

To stimulate Liberal thought and action.

To create amongst members of the Party an awareness of the philosophy and objectives of Liberalism.

To work for the election of endorsed candidates of the Party.

To provide training for speakers, Party officers and Parliamentary candidates.³

¹Minutes of Liberal Speakers Group, 17 February 1964.

²Annual Report, 1966-7.

³Brochure produced by Liberal Speakers Group, LSG [1967], [p.2].

The first and fourth of these are merely ritualistic statements of loyalty to the party, of the kind found in the objects of the other auxiliary bodies. But the remaining three point to the Group's characteristic educative role, which is interpreted as

encouraging research, study and discussion of political issues for the purpose of providing better informed and more effective speakers [and] thereby strengthening the active element of the Party.¹

Arising out of the Group's objectives, the range and style of its activities are, like the composition of its membership, distinctive: they are intended to contribute qualitatively to the party's organisation. Consequently there is an emphasis on such activities as radio and T.V. publicity, policy research, the investigation of aspects of organisation, addresses by senior Liberal parliamentarians and prominent outside speakers, the organisation of conferences dealing with topical political themes, and the development of political skills by the Group's members. In addition, since a number of state and federal politicians are members of the Group, it gains in importance as a point of liaison between the two wings of the party.

As one might infer from the composition of the Group's membership, it is an active body. General meetings are held each month. Several standing research committees dealing with defence and foreign affairs, Commonwealth-state financial relations, and the Liberal Party's platform and policy also meet monthly. In 1966-7, twelve other research sub-

¹Ibid.

committees were also convened.¹ The purpose of the committees is primarily to inform the members of the Group, but the fruits of their research are confidently 'expected ultimately to be of great benefit to the Party'.²

Only rarely (if ever, now) does the Group send a policy recommendation direct to the State Executive. In fact, the L.S.G. has little machinery for determining what its collective attitude is on any particular question of policy. It does not function as a deliberative body, but rather as one which provides individuals with an opportunity for enquiry into and discussion of areas of party policy and problems of organisation. The sub-committees compile reports and state their recommendations, but resolutions are rare and serve no clear purpose. Not being an integral part of the party's constitutional structure, the group is not entitled to place remits on the agenda paper of the State Council. Rather, Speakers Group influence on party policy is indirect. It is a fair guess that a good proportion of branch resolutions to the State Council have their genesis in the participation by many leading branch activists in the activities of the Speakers Group. If the Group as a whole is not an influential body, it must at least be seen as a 'club' which is joined by individuals whose share in party activities is disproportionate to their numbers. The office bearer of the Group who informed the writer that the L.S.G. 'controls the Executive and State Council'

¹They were labelled: Health and Social Services, Trade and Economics, Automation, Education, Foreign Investment in Australia, Housing, Immigration, Liberal Philosophy, National Development, Rural (Annual Report, 1966-7).

²LSG, [p.9].

exaggerated both the Group's influence and cohesion - but more the latter than the first.

The L.S.G. has not confined its interests to questions of party policy. In recent years it has produced and passed on to the State Executive two 'White Papers' on aspects of party organisation. The first,¹ submitted in 1964, surveyed the alleged weaknesses in the functioning of the party's organisation and suggested some remedies. The Executive allocated sections of the paper to four of its standing sub-committees for further examination.² The President's Standing Committee (composed of the state president, the four vice-presidents and the chairman of the Women's Section) rebuffed, sometimes heatedly, most of the criticisms and suggestions which it was asked to examine.³ But the Constitutional Committee endorsed, and the Executive adopted, one recommendation requiring applicants for pre-selection to support the statement of their credentials for candidature with a statutory declaration.⁴ The second 'White Paper', submitted to the Executive in 1968, argued the need for reform of the party's method of selecting parliamentary candidates, a matter in which many members of the Group have a close interest. The Executive took no immediate action to implement any of the report's proposals, though certain of its recommendations were 'accepted for eventual submission to State Council as Constitutional amendments'.⁵

¹Entitled "Where is the Party Heading?".

²SE, 7 May 1965.

³Ibid., 9 July 1965.

⁴Ibid., 7 July 1966.

⁵Annual Report of Liberal Speakers Group, 1967-8.

Another special interest of members of the Group is the obtaining of more prestigious party headquarters which would offer conference and club facilities for bodies like the L.S.G.¹

As part of the Group's emphasis on research and political education it organises several conferences each year, to which branch members are invited. The conferences focus on themes of current political relevance with speakers drawn from within and outside the party.² Attendances of 120 to 150 are recorded, suggesting that members of the Group itself provide most of the participants and that relatively few 'ordinary' branch activists attend. Nevertheless, the conferences are an aspect of party activity which has no counterpart within the party's basic organisation and is only matched in conception, but not in sophistication, by the Young Liberals' conferences.

As the Liberal Speakers Group's very name indicates and as stated by its fifth 'object', one of the main purposes of the Group is to provide training in the necessary political skill of public speaking. This was the prime reason for the formation of the Group in 1947. Its immediate forerunner in the performance of this service had been a panel of interested party members who attended a public-speaking course to prepare themselves to assist with the federal election campaign in 1946.³

¹Ibid., 1965-6, 1966-7, 1967-8.

²E.g., in 1965, conferences were held on the themes of: 'Censorship in Australia' and 'Australia Under Challenge?'; in 1966: 'Education-Target for Tomorrow' and 'National Development - Key to the Future'; in 1967: 'Law and Order Today', 'Health and Welfare in Our Society' and 'Australia's Defence Strategy - Now!'

³SE, 19 March 1946.

After the formation of the L.S.G., apart from electioneering, its members took part in the campaign in 1952 to revive the party's branches;¹ but the need for such proselytizing is less when the party is entrenched in power than when it is in opposition. The balance of activities in the Group has swung towards policy research and political education. The L.S.G., however, still undertakes, if requested, to provide guest speakers at branch meetings (indeed, it claims to be able to provide persons fluent in twelve languages besides English), and to assist branches with organising debates and panel discussions. In addition, two Liberal Speakers Group teams take part each year in the Victorian debating championships.

The serious business of political research and discussion is, of course, alleviated by some organised social activity. To take one year as typical: the Annual Report for 1966-7 lists a dinner at the Chevron Hotel, a luncheon with the federal Treasurer as guest speaker, a torchlight rally, a wine and brandy tasting evening, and a visit to night trotting as the guests of the chairman of the Trotting Control Board. The style of these functions, like the whole range of the Group's activities, is again noticeably superior to that associated with the more prosaic institutions within the party's organisation.

In all its activities the L.S.G. provides a more stimulating milieu for the 'upper level' of activists than can be found in the party's local organisation. In the long run, therefore, the Group probably succeeds in its stated object of 'strengthening the active element of

¹Argus, 26 January 1952.

the Party'.¹ For by associating with people similar in many ways to themselves, and participating in the Group's activities, its members develop the political skills which enable them individually and collectively to contribute more to the party than if they confined themselves to activity in its local structures.

THE NEW AUSTRALIAN MOVEMENT

A category of voters and potential voters which has attracted the attention of the party is the large non-British immigrant section of the community.

Between 1947 and 1966 Victoria's population increased from just over two million to 3,219,000; immigration accounted for almost half (48 per cent) of this.² To exploit the political potentialities of the numerically significant non-British migrant groups, the Liberal Party during 1951 formed a New Australian Movement, and established a standing sub-committee of the State Executive to encourage the growth of the movement and supervise its activities.³ The movement initially enjoyed a small measure of success. By the end of 1951, eleven branches had been formed among a number of east and south European national groups.⁴ A year later

¹L.S.G., [p.2].

²Of these migrants, 240,000 were from U.K. and Ireland, but 323,000 were non-British, their main countries of origin being Italy, Germany, Netherlands, Greece, Poland, Malta, Yugoslavia (Victorian Yearbook, 1968).

³A constitution for the movement was adopted in November 1951 (SE, 30 November 1951). Extracts from the constitution are given in Appendix B.

⁴Ibid., 28 September 1951. In June there had been eight branches representing Russian, Hungarian, Latvian, Slovak, Czech, Bulgarian, Estonian and Albanian national groups, while Polish, Italian, Greek, Lithuanian and two mixed branches were said to be in the process of formation (ibid., 1 June 1951).

a twelfth branch had been added.¹ In addition, the party appointed a full-time organiser to the movement,² established a migrants' advisory bureau on a part-time basis³ and, after some delay caused by problems in raising finance, formed a co-operative housing society.⁴ But the movement did not fulfil the party's hopes. The Executive sub-committee and the 'New Australian' leaders of the movement worked hard for it, but the interest shown by Liberal branches was disappointing,⁵ and the migrant communities were not as responsive as had been expected. In 1953, several of the sub-committee's reports to the Executive referred to the 'crisis' and 'difficulties' that the movement was experiencing, partly in connection with the delay in establishing the housing society, and partly as a result of unemployment among the groups on which the movement was based.⁶ Whether or not non-British migrants believed that the Liberal Party was, as it claimed to be in the movement's constitution, 'the only effective political opponent of Communism and other forms of totalitarianism', they did not rush to join the movement.

By 1955 the idea of a New Australian Movement had begun to pall. In June, the State Executive adopted a report from the New Australian

¹Ibid., 19 September 1952.

²Ibid. The appointment evidently did not last, for a report of the New Australian sub-committee in 1955 referred to the need for an organiser to stimulate recruitment to the movement (ibid., 3 June 1955).

³Ibid., 28 March 1952.

⁴Ibid., 13 March, 17 April, 9 October 1953; 5 February 1954.

⁵Ibid., 6 June 1952.

⁶Ibid., 13 March, 17 April 1953.

sub-committee which proposed among other things that migrants be encouraged to join established branches of the party as full members, but without voting rights in relation to the selection of candidates. Secondly, the sub-committee recommended that branches among migrant groups be recognised only 'where national leadership exerts a suitable influence'.¹ Soon after, however, when the State Council adopted the recommendation that non-British migrants be accepted into party branches with the status of 'provisional members', the State Executive decided to dissolve the New Australian Movement.² This decision was ratified by the Council and the movement was wound up in 1956.³

The party did not lose all interest in recruiting members from the migrant section of the community, but its good intentions and activity in this direction became sporadic. Thus, immediately after the movement was terminated, the Women's Section undertook to assist with canvassing for members among recently-naturalized 'New Australians'.⁴ Then, several years later, the Branch Development Committee of the State Executive became enthusiastic about attracting more migrants into the branches⁵ and was instrumental in organising a rally for this purpose in the industrial suburb of St. Albans.⁶ Again, in 1962, the state president, H.W. Snell,

¹Ibid., 3 June 1955.

²Ibid., 16 December 1955. See Constitution, 1965, Clause 2A.

³SE, 13 April 1956.

⁴Ibid., 13 July 1956.

⁵Ibid., 20 March, 24 July 1959.

⁶Ibid., 19 June 1959.

in his report to the State Council, expressed the wish that the party expand its 'New Australian' membership and reminded branches that they should be actively recruiting migrants.¹ Since the winding up of the New Australian Movement in 1956 there has been no sustained or systematic attempt to tap the political resources of this distinct section of the community. The party has been given more credit for its work among the migrant community than it perhaps deserves — certainly in recent years.²

UNIVERSITY LIBERAL CLUBS

The Liberal political clubs within the three universities in Melbourne have no formal links with the Liberal Party — nor is the latter anxious to establish any. The party has guarded views about the university clubs. They are seen as groups that are organisationally unstable and politically unpredictable. The party feels that it is important (and sometimes necessary) to be able to say publicly that the university clubs are not an integral part of its organisation. On the principle that 'left-wing' and 'extremist' viewpoints everywhere should be counterbalanced by a sane and responsible Liberal influence, the clubs are regarded as a good thing within the universities; but they cannot always be relied on to be sane, responsible and Liberal. In 1951, to give one of the most notorious instances, the Melbourne University club gained considerable publicity for

¹President's Report to State Council, 27 February 1962.

²E.g., Rawson, Australia Votes, p.8; Jupp, Australian Party Politics, pp.35, 73.

its opposition to the Liberal party's policy on the issue of the abolition of the Communist Party.¹ A fairly distant acknowledgment is thus all that the senior party can usually be expected to accord the university clubs. Nonetheless, in 1959, the Executive did agree to appoint a liaison officer to the Melbourne University club in response to an invitation from the latter.² The office, one suspects in the absence of any further reference to it, was purely nominal.

The relationship between the university clubs and the Young Liberal Movement is noticeably closer, the main reason being that some members of the movement are also active in the clubs. Yet attempts to establish formal links between the movement and any club have never progressed beyond an exploratory stage. In 1961 the Melbourne University group (the only one existing at the time) suggested to the party's State Executive that it be allowed to affiliate with the movement as a Young Liberal club. The state president of the party and the chairman of the Young Liberals were asked to examine the proposal.³ Their report squashed the idea. They discovered that the University club 'was not functioning as a body at the present time nor had [it] been for some time'. The Executive recommended that the club re-constitute itself and 'function for 12 months, when the question [of affiliation] could be re-considered'.⁴ Nothing more was heard of the matter. In its annual report for 1962-3,

¹Webb, Communism and Democracy in Australia, pp.80, 86-7.

²SE, 30 January 1959.

³Ibid., 17 March 1961.

⁴Ibid., 14 April 1961.

however, the Young Liberal Movement indicated that a 'very friendly relationship' had developed between it and the Melbourne University group. It added rather wistfully: 'It is to be hoped that the days of misunderstanding... are vanishing'.¹ On a personal and unofficial basis, close relations have in fact been maintained and, after the opening of the Monash University, the Young Liberals sponsored the formation of a Liberal club there.²

The university clubs stand well to one side of on-going Liberal Party affairs. But we can assign to them a role of varying importance in the recruitment and political socialisation of a small number of future party activists.

In 1966, some of the past office bearers of the Melbourne University club, and who had subsequently joined the Liberal Party, established the Deakin Group. It maintains a rather fragile existence, but its members hope that it may develop into a research group, standing in the same relation to the Liberal Party as the Bow Group to the British Conservative Party.

¹Annual Report of Young Liberal Movement, 1962-3.

²Minutes of State Executive of Young Liberal Movement, 12 October 1964.

CHAPTER 9

FINANCE

The Liberal Party has a dual financial structure (Figure 9.1). Although it depends on donations from the larger firms in the business community for the greater part of its funds, as did its non-Labor predecessors, it is also a mass party whose grass-roots organisation has an important money-raising function. The value to the party of contributions from nearly 25,000 middle and upper-middle-class citizens should not be underestimated.

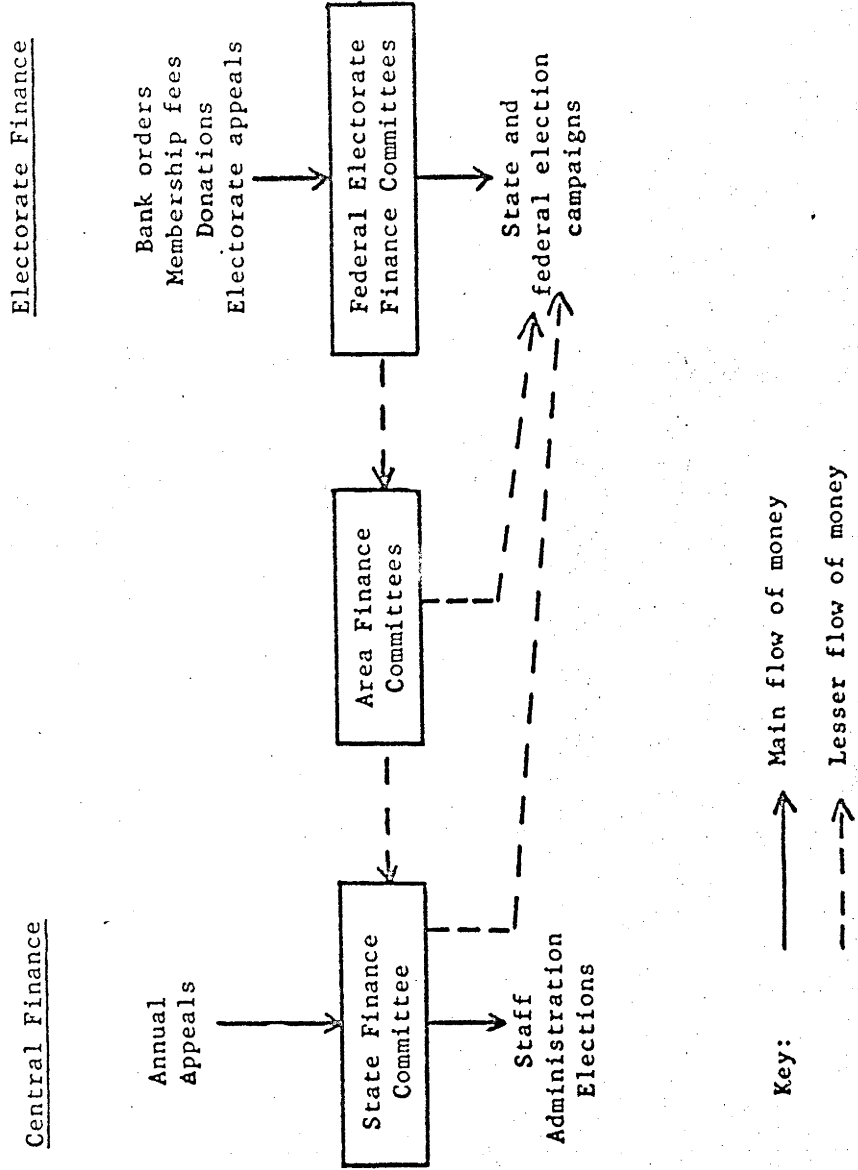
CENTRAL FINANCE

Unlike the U.A.P., the Liberal Party controls the collection and allocation of its own funds. When the party was formed, the State Finance Committee replaced the National Union as the body responsible for finding the money necessary for maintaining an organisation and contesting elections. The Committee's task, assisted by a small group of professional staff in the finance section of the Central Office, is to tap the party's traditional sources of income in the business community. The Committee is made up of the president of the party, who acts as its chairman, the honorary treasurer 'elected' by the State Council,¹ three trustees elected by the State Executive, one representative of each area

¹There has never been more than one nominee.

FIGURE 9.1

FINANCIAL STRUCTURE



finance committee and nine or ten others (not necessarily party members) appointed by the Executive every three years. Most of the latter are well-known Melbourne businessmen¹ who have 'the status to approach... selected contributors, particularly the larger ones'.² Personal links with the business community are a traditional element of the party's fund-raising procedures. Indeed, one of the important qualities required of the president is that he be a person of sufficient 'standing' to fraternize with members of the business community, be respected by them and win their confidence. The annual appeal to the party's main donors is made over the signature of the state president. Occasionally the income from this appeal is supplemented by a special appeal, though the party is loath to resort to these too often.

The party's central finances are cloaked in traditional secrecy - mainly in order to preserve the confidential nature of private donations, but partly also to avoid revealing the state of its coffers to its political enemies. Even members of the State Executive know little of the details of the party's finances, although in the words of one state president, the Executive 'has a moral right to be kept informed from time to time, in general terms, of the financial position'. But he added, 'there are problems in knowing just how far I ought to go in reporting to

¹See West, Power in the Liberal Party, p.52, footnote 166. Since the formation of the party a number of the appointees to the Finance Committee have been members of the Council of the Institute of Public Affairs. In 1968 the president and immediate past-president of the I.P.A., F.E. Lampe and Sir George Coles, and Council members Sir Ian Potter and J.C. Guest were serving on the Finance Committee.

²[Anderson], Report of Organisation Review Sub-Committee, p.8.

the Executive'.¹

The funds raised by the central appeal are intended to cover the cost of administration, the salaries of professional staff, rental of premises, and subsidies to the party's auxiliary organisations, as well as provide a central election 'fighting fund' from which are financed major aspects of election campaigns.² Only a fraction of the centrally-raised finance is allocated to the local organisations in the form of assistance towards the campaigns of candidates in marginal or industrial electorates, which have little branch organisation of their own.

FINANCE AT ELECTORATE LEVEL

A basic source of income in a mass party is the subscriptions paid by its members. When the Liberal Party first defined its membership fee, however, financial considerations were outweighed by notions of party democracy. To demonstrate that it was a genuine people's party, open to all who wished to join it, the basic subscription was fixed at the nominal sum of two shillings and sixpence. Paradoxically, then, the Liberal Party, which was to draw more of its members than any other from the well-to-do sections of the community, also charged by far the lowest dues of any party in the state.³ This was made possible by the party's

¹SE, 8 December 1967.

²See below, p. 365.

³In 1963 these were: A.L.P., ten shillings; C.P., two guineas; D.L.P., four shillings ordinary, £1 special. See Colin A. Hughes, 'Australia', Journal of Politics, Vol. 25, No.4, 1963, p.650.

reliance on large-scale donations. Nevertheless, 'half-crown membership' was appealingly democratic and was widely supported by branch activists for this reason. Consequently, the fee was retained at this level for twenty years until, in 1965, the State Council agreed to double it to five shillings -- after rejecting a suggestion to raise it to ten shillings.¹ But in relation to money values even five shillings was a token amount and in 1968 the Council sanctioned a further increase, this time to one dollar, a sum equivalent to that which it had demurred over only three years before.²

It was not until the party leaders were faced with a financial crisis at the end of the organisational boom years of 1948-50 that they began to look more seriously at the grass-roots organisation as a source of funds.³ A motion to increase the basic fee from two shillings and sixpence to five shillings was defeated within the Executive.⁴ But at special meetings called by the state president, representatives of the party in the wealthier suburban and rural electorates were 'notified that in the future, it would be necessary [for them] to provide financial support for the Headquarters of the Organisation'.⁵

Potentially the better-organised electorates were capable of giving such assistance (and to some extent did), but the system of electorate finance was geared first and foremost to local needs. Based

¹SC, 24-5 February 1965.

²Ibid., 28-9 February 1968.

³SE, 10 November 1950.

⁴Ibid., 8 December 1950.

⁵Ibid.

solely on the branches and electorate committees, it was reasonably adequate for intra-electorate purposes, but was essentially haphazard, inefficient and not designed to sustain a flow of money from the electorates to the party's central funds. The first concern of the electorate committees was to solicit from the branches sufficient money to meet the next campaign budget; surpluses from one election were usually held in reserve for the next. Similarly, branches adjusted their fund-raising activities to the short-term objective of fulfilling the quotas imposed upon them by the electorate committees as their share of the local election campaign. Once they had achieved this, by rounding up overdue membership subscriptions and appealing for money from members and supporters, the branches tended to relax their fund-raising activities.

As Table 9.1 illustrates, branch income was likely to fall away markedly in non-election years - unless a branch committee could be stimulated into 'unseasonal' activity as in the Eltham branch in 1960.

Finance raising at electorate level was thus a highly parochial activity - as an incident in the federal electorate of Henty demonstrated. At the end of the 1951 election campaign the electorate committee found itself with a surplus of £200. Although at this time the party's central funds were in a seriously-depleted state, there was no question of the electorate committee's donating its surplus to the party, despite the urging of at least one branch. On the contrary, the committee refused for a time even to reimburse the Central Office the sum of £77 for the printing of how-to-vote cards. Instead it tried to interest branches in retaining

TABLE 9.1

FEES AND DONATIONS TO DEEPEENE AND ELTHAM BRANCHES

Year and Elections	Deepeene £ (rounded)	Eltham £
1953 S. ^a	(no data)	15
1954 H.	(no data)	43
1955 S, H, LA, LC.	55	97
1956 -	19	13
1957 -	43	9
1958 S, H, LA, LC.	94	66
1959 -	(no data)	(no data)
1960 -	43	49 ^b
1961 S, H, LA, LC.	80	(no data)

Key to elections:

S = Senate
H = House of Representatives (federal)
LA = Legislative Assembly (state)
LC = Legislative Council (state)
- = No general elections

Notes: ^aFinanced largely from central funds.
^bIn 1960 the branch entered an active phase and organised several membership drives. Membership rose from forty-two to 125 between August 1960 and March 1961 (Minutes of Eltham branch, 10 August 1960; 17 March 1961).

Source: Minutes of Eltham branch, 31 May 1956; 15 May 1958; 7 August 1959; 17 March 1961; Minutes of Deepeene branch, 20 March 1956; 21 March 1957; 11 March 1958; 11 March 1959; 23 March 1961; 27 March 1962.

the services of an organiser in the electorate by suggesting that the surplus campaign funds be put towards the payment of the organiser's salary. Eventually the committee abandoned this plan and reimbursed the Central Office, but insisted on retaining the balance of its 'profits'.¹

W.H. Anderson criticised the same tendency towards parochialism within the local organisations when he wrote:

There is no need for Branches to regard themselves as autonomous concerns, raising merely enough to finance their own operations... They should be educated to their responsibility to the Party as a whole, and discontinue the too frequent attitude of regarding State Headquarters as an enemy.²

In the face of this, the president's request in 1950. for assistance to the party's central funds from the 'periphery' was ineffective. The existing machinery of electorate finance was too decentralised and geared to the immediate needs of the local organisations. In 1958, the State Finance Committee recommended a more mandatory solution; it called for the annual membership fee to be increased from half-a-crown to one pound, of which the branches would be entitled to retain only five shillings.³

The State Executive, which appointed a sub-committee to look into the matter, was clearly in sympathy with the Finance Committee's objective of reclaiming a greater proportion of the running expenses of the organisation from members; but it was also constrained by the party's principle

¹Minutes of Darling-East Malvern branch, 21 May, 4 June, 16 July 1961.

²Report of Organisation Review Sub-Committee, 1958, p.10.

³SE, 27 June 1958.

of nominal fees and membership for all.¹ As it was unlikely that the State Council would ratify an increase as large as that suggested by the Finance Committee, the Executive sought an alternative in the bank order method of payment of subscriptions. This method was already widely used in country areas and the Executive was familiar with its advantages;² but it had made no headway in suburban electorates, partly because suburban activists were unfamiliar with the procedure and/or were suspicious of it.³ Its advantages, however, could not be ignored if a greater attempt was to be made to increase the importance of the party's grass-roots as a source of income. The Executive therefore resolved to develop 'fighting funds' in all federal electorates on the basis of bank order payments,⁴ and the Council ratified this decision.⁵

Finance suddenly became an even more prominent issue within the party. The first cause of this was a move by the Federal Finance Committee to expand the scope of its appeals in Victoria and N.S.W.⁶ Both state Divisions saw this as a threat to their financial independence on the ground that firms might be inclined to give donations to the federal appeal in preference to the state one, if they could not contribute to both. The two states successfully fought the federal body's moves, only

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 6 July 1950.

³See above, p.119.

⁴SE, 5 December 1958.

⁵SC, 4-5 March 1959.

⁶For detailed account see West, pp.239-43.

to find their central finances immediately threatened from another direction. Contributions to the Victorian party's central fund shrank as business donors experienced the economic recession of 1960-61 and also registered a protest at the federal government's budgetary policies. A special appeal for funds from the local organisations helped to tide the party over the crisis,¹ but at the end of 1961, with a federal election due, the Executive readily admitted that finance was the party's 'fundamental problem'.² The effects of the recession on the party's finances gave real point to an opinion which the president had already forcibly stated to the Executive. He emphasised that the party's fund-raising procedures 'must include far greater contributions from the organization itself'.³

To this end the Executive introduced the present electorate finance structure.⁴ Its main features are a system of committees whose sole concern is finance, a greater emphasis on enrolling 'bank-order members',⁵ and automatic payments into the fighting funds which had been authorised in 1959. The new system involves the formation of finance committees within the federal electorates and, above them, area committees

¹SE, 16 June 1961.

²Ibid., 3 November 1961.

³Ibid., 8 April 1960 (original emphasis).

⁴Ibid., 3 November 1961.

⁵In party terminology members are now referred to as 'cash members' or 'bank-order members' according to the method by which they pay their subscriptions.

comprising one representative from each of a group of electorate finance committees.¹ The areas in turn are represented on the State Finance Committee, thus linking the electorates with the central fund-raising body and (it is hoped) breaking down some of the parochialism that had bedevilled the former system.

The first finance committees were established in the wealthy and well-organised electorates in the Western District and in the upper-middle-class Melbourne suburbs -- the electorates to which in the early 1950s the party had looked for additional finance.²

The finance committees, comprising an average of eight to twelve members, are not part of the elective structure of the organisation. Officially they are established by the State Finance Committee,³ but in reality they are set up on the initiative of the general secretary, state president and the leading activists (who will usually serve on the committees) in the respective electorates. To ensure a close liaison between the finance committees and the federal and state electorate committees the latter's chairmen or treasurers (or both) are invariably members of the finance committee.⁴

¹ Four areas are provided for -- Northern, Eastern, Western, Metropolitan. Only the latter two operate, the Western area from an office in Camperdown, where a full-time secretary is employed, and the Metropolitan area from the Central Office.

² In the Western District: Corangamite, Corio, Ballarat, Wannon, Wimmera. The first six finance committees to be established in the metropolitan area in 1962-3 were Balaclava, Chisholm, Fawkner, Flinders, Higgins, Kooyong.

³ Constitution, 1965, Clause 52.

⁴ Victorian Division, Organisation Series, Party Funds, p.6.

The committees derive their funds from three sources: first, from members' bank order payments, which are credited directly to the electorate fighting fund;¹ secondly, from the branches, which must remit to the finance committee fifty cents for every member who does not subscribe through a bank order;² and thirdly, from appeals to local businessmen and supporters in their electorates.

Under the present system of electorate finance, the party aims as far as possible to make bank-order payments the basis of membership. In suburban electorates, as we have noted, this met with a certain amount of resistance, but by 1964 over one third of all metropolitan members were said to have enrolled in this way.³ There are good, or at least sufficient, reasons for the party's seeking to increase its bank-order membership. Bank orders are a more reliable and lucrative source of funds than cash subscriptions: orders of less than two dollars are not accepted, but their average value is much more than that. The Kooyong finance committee, for example, reported in 1964 that 165 bank orders in the

¹The proceeds from bank orders are divided up as follows:

- (i) the equivalent of one membership fee per bank order is refunded to the member's branch. (This sum was fixed at 50 cents when the membership fee was raised to \$1 from 1 March 1969.)
- (ii) 30 per cent to area finance committees to assist in financing the party, area administration and assistance to industrial electorates;
- (iii) balance is retained in electorate fighting fund for local election purposes.

²Constitution, Clause 53 (ii).

³President's Report to State Council, 26 February 1964. In country areas the proportion reaches as high as 90 per cent (ibid.).

electorate were providing a yearly income of £464.¹ In the same electorate a branch reported that a membership drive in 1965 resulted in nineteen new bank orders worth £56.18.0, while its twenty-seven new cash subscriptions and donations amounted to less than one third of that amount - £15.11.0.² More recently the same branch noted that its fifty-two bank orders were valued at \$440-- an average of more than eight dollars per member.³ It is not surprising, therefore, that branches are officially encouraged to pursue bank orders.⁴

In addition to their compulsory remittances of fifty cents per member, branches are exhorted to undertake fund-raising activities to swell the electorate's income. 'Loyalty parties' are one recommended device. These involve a branch's inviting 'known Liberals within the Area who are not on Bank Orders and possibly not even members of the Party' to a late afternoon function in a private home, where a party official will 'give a brief address, answer questions, and obtain Bank Orders there and then'.⁵

A more lucrative method of raising funds locally is by direct appeals from the finance committees to business firms within their electorates. These sources are beyond the reach of the party's central

¹Kooyong Finance Committee, Newsletter to branches, 3 April 1964, p.6.

²Minutes of North Camberwell branch, 5 April 1965.

³Ibid., 6 March 1967.

⁴Party Funds, p.5.

⁵Ibid.

appeals, yet in the past neither the branches nor the electorate committees systematically and effectively solicited donations from them. In 1964 the Kooyong finance committee organised a group of fifteen businessmen who were resident in the electorate to canvass the smaller businesses in Kooyong and Darebin (a neighbouring Labor-held electorate in which there was no Liberal organisation). The 'target' for each participant was 'four fruitful calls per year'.¹ Comparable with this, in the same year, the Corangamite finance committee notified branches in its electorate that it intended to make an appeal 'to selected individuals' who were not already subscribers to the party through bank orders, but who preferred to make a direct donation to the electorate fighting fund 'when extra finance [was] urgently needed'. To assist the finance committee in this enterprise the branches were asked to submit a list of names and addresses of residents in their areas to whom they considered an appeal should be made.²

In administering an electorate's funds a finance committee's first responsibility is to ensure that it has raised sufficient money to cover the expense of state and federal elections in its area. Wealthier electorates are expected to contribute also to the cost of campaigns in electorates which have inadequate finances of their own. The Kooyong finance committee is thus responsible for raising funds to cover campaigns in the federal division of Kooyong and its associated state electorates of Kew and Balwyn. It also shares the cost of

¹Kooyong Finance Committee, Newsletter, 3 April 1964, p.5.

²Area Staff Officer, Circular Letter to branches, 3 February 1964.

elections in the East Yarra province, as well as contributing to the campaigns in specific Labor electorates, usually the federal division of Darebin and the state districts of Reservoir and Preston. Along with other finance committees in the Metropolitan area, the Kooyong committee forwards sums to the area committee as a contribution towards the party's administrative costs, thus relieving some of the pressure on central finances. In 1964 the Kooyong finance committee's annual target for this purpose was approximately £500 or nearly one third of its annual income.¹

There is no doubt that the creation of specialised finance committees and the greater emphasis on securing bank orders have strengthened the financial structure of the local organisations. Most Liberal-held electorates raise enough money to meet their own election expenses and through the functioning of two area committees make a useful contribution to the overall running costs of the organisation.

As well as raising money more effectively, the system of finance committees and fighting funds appears to have removed a cause of petty friction from within the local organisations. Formerly the electorate committees were responsible for collecting from the branches sufficient finance to cover the budgeted expenses of each election campaign. The financial relationship between the branches and the committees was a source of recurring bitterness and irritation. The usual procedure adopted by electorate committees was to levy the branches sums which varied according to the size of their memberships. The quotas, though

¹Kooyong Finance Committee, Newsletter, 3 April 1964, p.1.

rarely excessive, often seemed unreasonable to the branches, which frequently met their 'obligations' with bad grace, or in instalments, if they attempted to meet them in full at all. The case of the Deakin federal electorate in 1954 provides a good example: the electorate committee levied its eighteen branches sums ranging from £15 to £110. But the amounts actually received from the branches ranged from only £11 to £25. Only three branches paid their quota in full, and the total received was less than half the amount hoped for.¹

Nothing wounded the pride of branch activists more than the imputation that their branch was not making its due contribution to the local organisation. Thus when the chairman of the East Yarra province committee attended the annual meeting of the East Kew branch and criticised the branch's cheque of £25, the branch, stung, replied that it 'always gave more to fighting funds than any other branch and on this occasion would again subscribe more than the minimum asked for'.² On a similar occasion, however, the Box Hill North branch was less forthcoming in its moment of pique. After receiving a 'terse letter' from the treasurer of the Box Hill electorate committee, which stated that the branch owed £54, the branch committee at first resolved to send only £15 before amending this sum to twenty.³ The present system, however, enables electorate committees to adjust their campaign budgets to a known

¹Minutes of Deakin electorate committee, 14 July 1954.

²Minutes of East Kew branch, 24 February 1956.

³Minutes of Box Hill North branch, 25 August 1961.

amount in the electorate fighting fund and to avoid situations of the kind just cited.

Whatever the Liberal Party's membership lacks in mass it makes up in money. The overwhelmingly middle-class composition of its membership is a valuable attribute in relation to the party's financial resources.¹ Donations, not fees, have always been the basis of Liberal grass-roots finance. From the beginning, branch activists were urged to regard the half-crown basic fee as an inadequate minimum and to 'adopt a target of an average annual subscription of £1 per member'.² It is impossible to even guess what proportion of party members did, in fact, pay only the minimum fee, but branch records indicate that a significant number of them contributed amounts in excess of this sum. Several examples will suffice to illustrate this: in 1960 the Kew East branch referred to donations of up to £50 in response to appeals for funds.³ On an earlier occasion the income of the same branch had shown remarkable resilience when its credit balance rose from £36 to £169 between May and October 1955; yet according to the branch's membership at the time, fees

¹The Liberal party's grass-roots organisation is apparently a far more fruitful source of finance than that of the A.L.P. Thus, in 1958, fifteen Liberal branches in different electorates contributed in all just over £1000 towards the cost of the state and federal elections in that year (calculated from branch minutes), while sixty-four A.L.P. branches gave £1200 towards their party's federal election expenses (Hughes, Journal of Politics, p.653). Allowing for the possibility of additional Labor contributions towards the state elections, this example still indicates a large difference between the two parties

²SC, 2-3 October 1945. See also Argus, 14 February 1946; Minutes of Eltham branch, 10 August 1960.

³Minutes of Kew East branch, 12 May 1960.

alone could not have accounted for more than £7. 5.0 of this.¹ Between 1963 and 1966, membership fees in the Canterbury branch accounted for £51.10.0 while donations amounted to £184;² for the Kew branch (1965-7) the amounts were £27.10.0 from fees and £66.10.0 from donations;³ and at Kew North East (1954-60) they were £85 and £87 respectively.⁴

In country electorates, bank order payments are the equivalent of the suburban members' donations and up to 90 per cent of country members subscribe in this way.⁵ At no time therefore has the amount of the basic subscription rate been an accurate indicator of the financial value of membership. The social composition of membership is a better clue to this. The money is there, as the party well knows; its problem is to mobilise it.

The Liberal Party's dependence on the donations of business firms for the greater proportion of its income has not left it as indifferent to the lesser potentialities of local sources of finance as its non-Labor predecessors appeared to be. On the contrary the party has attempted with some success to widen the financial responsibilities of its local organisations. Like any mass party, it has thus built into

¹Ibid., 13 May, 26 October 1955. At the latter meeting, financial membership was given as 58.

²Minutes of Canterbury branch, 27 March 1964; 26 April 1965; 7 March 1966.

³Minutes of Kew branch, 30 March 1965; 3 March 1966; 15 March 1967.

⁴Minutes of Kew North East branch, 20 April 1955; 26 April 1956; 16 October 1957; 14 March 1958; 1 July 1959.

⁵President's Report to State Council, 26 February 1964.

itself a powerful financial incentive not merely to maintain but to expand its membership. This may not be the only motive for the party's seeking after 'greatness of numbers', but, as was suggested in Chapter 5, it has become the most prominent one.

CHAPTER 10

THE RECRUITMENT OF CANDIDATES

Providing political leaders is a basic function of parties. They perform an essential part of this function by nominating candidates for parliament. How is this process achieved in the Liberal Party? Candidate recruitment, whereby a person becomes an official party nominee, is a complex process.¹ At an early stage it involves an individual's decision to contest an election and the way in which he deliberately or incidentally acquires such necessary qualifications for Liberal candidacy as an approved social style, demonstrable political skills and, above all, a favourable party reputation. The decisive final stage of recruitment is selection, or the process of choosing a particular person as the party's nominee from among a group of aspirants. As Schlesinger remarks, this process is typically 'more overt' and formal than the earlier phases of recruitment, and is carried out according to 'rules of procedure which serve to make the nomination authoritative',² one of which usually

¹E.g., see Frank J. Sorauf, Party and Representation: Legislative Politics in Pennsylvania, New York, 1963, Chapter 5 (especially pp.95-110). Other examples of attempts to distinguish analytically the various stages in the recruitment of candidates are: Lester S. Seligman, 'Political Recruitment and Party Structure: A Case Study', American Political Science Review, Vol. LV, No.1, March 1961, pp.77-86; Lewis Bowman and G.R. Boynton, 'Recruitment Patterns Among Local Party Officials: A Model and Some Preliminary Findings in Selected Locales', *ibid.*, Vol. LX, No.3, September 1966, pp.667-76; James David Barber, The Lawmakers: Recruitment and Adaptation to Legislative Life, New Haven, 1965, pp.10-15 and *passim*; Dwaine Marvick, 'Political Recruitment and Careers', in International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, ed. David L. Sills, New York, 1968, Vol.12, pp.273-81.

²Joseph A. Schlesinger, 'Party Units', in International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, ed. David L. Sills, New York, 1968, Vol.II, p.433.

requires the selected applicant to be officially endorsed as the party candidate.

In the absence of survey data, we are unable to discuss the personal motives and circumstances which underlie the candidates' decisions to seek election to parliament. This chapter concentrates instead on how, rather than why, some persons become Liberal Party candidates for parliament; it deals with what Sorauf would regard as an aspect of 'the mechanics of seeking office'.¹

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CANDIDACY

The recruitment and selection of candidates is governed in the long run by the number and nature of opportunities for candidacy.² The total number of parliamentary seats sets a formal limit to the size of the opportunity structure. In this respect federalism and bicameralism provide generously for party members who have an interest in contesting elections: there are 153 parliamentary seats in Victoria.³ Moreover, since the formation of the party, significant increases in the number of parliamentary seats, and so of opportunities for candidacy, have been brought about by federal redistributions in 1948 and 1968, and the re-drawing of state electoral boundaries before the elections of 1955, 1958 and 1967.

¹Sorauf, Party and Representation, p.98.

²Cf., 'The study of political recruitment must begin with a consideration of what the jobs in politics are. First come the legally defined positions' (Marvick, International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, p.276).

³Legislative Assembly, 73; Legislative Council, 36; House of Representatives, 34; Senate, 10.

Several factors, however, combine to make real opportunities for candidacy much fewer than the total seats. In any election the number of seats a party contests is a matter of policy, which is affected by its general electoral strategies, organisational resources, distribution of electoral support and relations with other parties in parliament. The Liberal Party's basic electoral policy has not changed since it was first stated in 1947. The Executive then accepted the principle of organising on a 'state-wide, nonsectional basis' and the practice which followed from this of contesting 'at least a majority' of both country and metropolitan seats.¹ While this was necessary as a means of winning office, it was also looked on as a way of 'organising and welding the progressive and non-socialist elements within the community by giving them the opportunity to vote for a Liberal candidate on as wide a basis as possible'.² It is party policy, therefore, at each election to endorse a Liberal candidate in all or nearly all state and federal electorates. In deference to the federal coalition, however, the Country Party has not been opposed by Liberal candidates in the divisions of Gippsland and Murray, while the electorate of Mallee was contested for the first time by a Liberal in 1969. At state level also, relations with the Country Party usually have caused Liberal candidates to be withheld from some seats in the same areas. But in both the 1961 and 1964 state elections every electorate was contested, while in 1967 only in Murray Valley, the seat occupied by the leader of the state parliamentary C.P., was there no

¹SE, 25 February 1947.

²Ibid.

Liberal nominee. The effect of the party's electoral policy, therefore, is to maximise the number and variety of opportunities for candidacy. Recruitment thus occurs in several broadly different electoral and organisational situations.

Another limitation on opportunities for Liberal candidacy derives from the size and stability of the party's parliamentary wing. An electorate already held by a Liberal member ceases to be a real opportunity for candidacy until the incumbent retires, dies, is defeated or, more rarely, loses the party endorsement. Thus a significant diminution of opportunities was caused by the sudden but, as they have proved, long-term increases in Liberal representation at both state and federal levels in 1955, which resulted from the split in the A.L.P. and the subsequent formation of the D.L.P. From the mid-1950s a condition of electoral stability in which the Liberal Party is dominant has affected the recruitment of candidates. Since then, relatively few seats have become available to activists with parliamentary ambitions.

Finally, the opportunity structure is affected by certain conventions of the political system, such as the expectation that a parliamentarian will live in or near to the electorate he represents, in order to perform his role as local member. Absentee representation is frowned on; a candidate facing a selection convention outside the electorate in which he resides can expect to be asked whether, if selected, he intends to move into the electorate he hopes to represent.

SELECTION AND ENDORSEMENT

Parties are entitled to nominate as many candidates as they wish in any election or electorate; yet it is the normal practice to endorse only one for each electorate.¹ This is clearly the rule in the Victorian Liberal Party whose constitution makes no provision for multiple endorsements. There are good reasons for this practice. It ensures that the party's resources of money and manpower are concentrated in support of a minimum number of candidates; and it avoids the divisive situation where branch members in an electorate work for the return of different candidates who are, in effect, competing against each other as well as the candidates of rival parties. Selection and endorsement are also disciplinary weapons. They can be used if necessary to help maintain the values of loyalty and solidarity which, in varying degrees, are attributes of all parties and especially those in a parliamentary system. Given the vote-attracting value of party labels, withdrawal of endorsement means an almost certain and fairly quick end to a member's parliamentary career. In Victoria no Liberal M.P., having lost his party's endorsement, has survived more than one election as an Independent Liberal.

Because of the importance, both for the party and for individual members, of the selection and endorsement procedures, it is appropriate to look first at the way the party makes its final choice of candidates.

¹For an example of a recent rare Labor exception to this rule see P. Aimer, 'The Dual Endorsement in the Federal Electorate of Riverina, 1966', Politics, Vol.II, No.1, May 1967, pp.32-35. For a discussion of the trend away from multiple endorsement in the Country Party see Aitkin, The Organisation of the Australian Country Party, pp.338-44.

In any party, moreover, the procedures for selection and endorsement greatly influence the earlier stages of the recruitment of candidates. A person who is ambitious for a seat in parliament must shape his strategies to the demands of the selection procedure well before the formal machinery of selection has been set in motion.

The party does not have one selection procedure but several.¹ Candidates for the House of Representatives and Legislative Assembly are selected by conventions of branch representatives in each federal or state electorate. Each branch has a basic entitlement of ten representatives for a financial membership of up to 100. Each additional twenty-five members qualify the branch for one further representative up to a maximum of twenty-four. If the boundaries of a branch extend beyond one electorate its representation at a convention is adjusted according to the proportion of the branch's members in that electorate.² Representatives must live in the electorate concerned and must include equal numbers of men and women.

Candidates for the Legislative Council, however, are selected by the province electorate committees which are made up of four representatives from each branch in the province.

The selection of Senate candidates is different again. As Senators are elected on a state-wide constituency and are not associated

¹The details below are based on Constitution, 1965, Clauses 60-85.

²Thus if one quarter of the members of a branch live in X electorate and the total branch representation, based on its whole membership, is 120 the branch is entitled to send representatives numbering one quarter of this (30) to X convention.

with any particular electorate, a selection system based on branch representatives is impracticable. Until 1960, therefore, Senate candidates were selected by a committee consisting of seven Victorian members of the Federal Council and seven of the State Council. This in reality was a committee of fourteen members of the State Executive. In 1960 it was expanded to include the whole of the Executive acting as a convention. Since the Executive controls the selection of Senate candidates, it is less surprising that all Victorian Liberal Senators were, at the time of their selection, members of the State Executive.

Parties differ in the degree to which their central and local institutions participate in the selection of candidates.¹ Where parliamentary representation is based on single member constituencies both levels of organisation are commonly represented in the selection process, the central bodies participating in order to take into account the interests of the party as a whole as against the more parochial needs of the separate electorates, and as a safeguard against personal control

¹E.g., in the Liberal and Country League of South Australia and the N.S.W. branch of the A.L.P., candidates are selected by ballot of rank-and-file members; in the N.S.W. Division of the Liberal Party, selection conventions in metropolitan electorates are made up of thirty representatives from branches within the electorate and twenty members of the State Council; in the A.L.P. (Victoria) selection is in the hands of the party's Executive, who are joined for this purpose by a relatively small number of representatives of the party in the electorate concerned. Each method suggests a different set of strategies for prospective parliamentary candidates. For a summary of the formal provisions for pre-selection in the main parties in all states see Florence Gould, 'Pre-Selecting the Candidates', in Australian Politics: a second reader, ed. Henry Mayer, pp.289-92.

or manipulation, for selection purposes, of the local organisations.

As we have just noted, in the Victorian Liberal Party the central institutions are not represented at the conventions; the choice of candidates is entirely in the hands of branch representatives in each electorate. A proportion of the activists taking part will, of course, also be members of the State Council or even of the Executive, but they are not acting in these roles at a convention and the party takes pride in its decentralised and fundamentally democratic selection procedure.

When the party was first formed, provision was made for qualifications committees in each electorate to play a major part in the choosing of candidates. The committees comprised representatives of the branches in the electorate and members of the State Council (in practice members of the Executive), the latter always being in a minority. Their function was to select a candidate from the applicants and recommend his nomination to a convention of the branches in the electorate, or to the branches individually, for approval or rejection.¹ It was argued that the composition of the committees would ensure that both local and general party interests were considered.

This procedure was discredited almost immediately by events in the state electorates of Toorak and Malvern in October 1945. In Toorak the qualifications committee recommended the endorsement of the retiring member, H.E. Thonemann, preferring him to Cr. R.B. Hamilton; but the convention of about 400 branch members twice rejected the motion to

¹SC, 2-3 October 1945.

endorse Thonemann and was finally adjourn^fed 'inconclusively' without endorsing either candidate.¹ Both Thonemann and Hamilton addressed the meeting, but a third applicant, C.E. Kennett, later complained that although he had nominated for pre-selection 'the branches at Toorak were not permitted to know the fact'.² The situation was no clearer when, a month after the convention, all three contested the seat in the state election, Thonemann and Hamilton as unendorsed Liberals and Kennett as an Independent. Hamilton won the seat by a fairly comfortable margin.

Concurrently with the confusion in Toorak there was trouble over the selection of a candidate for Malvern. Despite obvious differences of detail between the two cases the causes of contention were alike in many ways. The Malvern qualifications committee recommended Brigadier Cremor, by five votes to four, in preference to T.D. Oldham, the retiring member for Boroondara electorate, which had been abolished in a boundary redistribution.³ The convention of branches, however, agreed to a motion which asked for the names of the other applicants who had been considered by the qualifications committee. Speaking to this, one member of the convention strongly criticised the existing procedure, on the ground that the convention was 'expected to vote yea or nay' for the recommended candidate, without considering any others. He added: 'We all should have an opportunity to discuss and listen to the qualifications of the other candidates'.⁴ The convention of branches, having permitted the four other

¹Argus, 12 October 1945.

²Ibid., 25 October 1945.

³Ibid., 9 October 1945.

⁴Ibid., 13 October 1945.

candidates originally rejected by the qualifications committee to address it, then reversed the committee's choice and endorsed Oldham.

Elsewhere the party's original selection procedures appeared to arouse less acrimony than in Toorak and Malvern, where the presence of retiring members of parliament may have caused additional tension. In Caulfield, A.H. Dennett, the choice of the qualifications committee, was endorsed 'by an overwhelming majority', but it is noteworthy that this convention also called for the five other applicants (only two of whom were present) to address the meeting.¹ Similarly in Hawthorn all four candidates were presented to the convention which then unanimously endorsed F.L. Edmunds, whom the qualifications committee had recommended.²

Experience of the newly-adopted machinery for selecting candidates before the 1945 state election showed that changes would have to be made before party members would accept it with confidence as a legitimate procedure. The fact that several conventions claimed the right to evaluate the qualifications of all applicants undermined one of the chief functions of the electorate qualifications committee, namely, to make considered recommendations to the electorate conventions. Secondly, the system of electorate conventions composed of all branch members was appealingly democratic, although it was also open to abuse -- in a way suggested by the incensed Brigadier Cremor's scathing final words on the Malvern selection: 'I suggest now that the farce is over that

¹Ibid., 16 October 1945.

²Ibid.

those people who have joined the various Malvern branches since last Friday should pay an extra 2/6 for the enjoyment of the farce'.¹

Despite his complaint there was more reason than not for changing the procedure. The machinery of selection was promptly amended to a form similar to that of the present: the qualifications committees were abandoned and with them went all official participation in the choosing of a candidate by representatives of the State Executive; the task of checking the qualifications of applicants was given to the electorate committees which, at their discretion, were entitled to indicate their preferences by recommending one or more candidates to the convention. The composition of and procedures employed by the electorate conventions were also changed: branch delegates only were to attend instead of all branch members. Following the practice established by several conventions in 1945, all applicants were to be presented to the convention and the final selection of a candidate was to be made by preferential ballot.²

The new selection procedure was put into practice in February 1946, in order to choose a candidate for a by-election in the federal electorate of Henty. There were nine nominees for Henty and the difficulty of ranking in order of preference a large number of contestants must have been immediately evident. It is perhaps for this reason that the press reports of the convention referred to the use of the exhaustive ballot.³

¹Ibid., 13 October 1945.

²See Constitution, as amended to 30 July 1946, Section XVII. The amendments were ratified by the State Council on 5 February 1946.

³Argus, 21, 27 February 1946. In the 'exhaustive ballot', if no candidate secures an absolute majority of votes the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated and another ballot taken; this process is repeated until one candidate wins an absolute majority.

The advantages of this particular method of preferential voting were such that it became the rule and was eventually written into the constitution.

Since 1946 many lesser changes in the details of the selection procedure have been made and a great many more have been suggested. In the Constitution, Section XI, 'Selection of Candidates', now covers six pages and is by far the longest section. Selecting candidates is an activity which arouses intense interest and strong feelings among party members. The numerous amendments to details of the procedure have been intended to ensure that it operates as fairly as possible for all candidates, and so is accepted as a legitimate procedure by branch members and candidates alike.

Reference to one of the more recent examples will adequately illustrate the pragmatic nature of this process of constitutional amendment. After complaints had been made in connection with the selection of candidates in the state electorates of Toorak and Moorabbin in 1963, the State Executive set up a sub-committee to investigate the existing method of appointing branch representatives to a convention.¹ As a result of the committee's recommendations the rules governing selections were altered to provide further constraint to the practice of enrolling members in a branch for the immediate purpose of increasing the number of delegates it was entitled to send to a convention. It was stipulated that a branch's representation would be calculated on the basis of the number of persons who had been financial members of the branch for at least three months at the time of the closing of applications for

¹SE, 15 November 1963.

selection.¹ Until then it had been possible to form a new branch between the time of the closing of applications and twenty-one days before the convention.² The purpose of such a branch, as the sub-committee pointed out, would be to provide representatives who were committed to vote for a particular candidate.³ This, as we shall see, contravened one of the assumptions of the convention system of selecting candidates.

Frequent tinkering with procedural details did not affect the basic principle, clearly established by 1946, that the selection of candidates is a decentralised activity to be carried out solely by branch members in each electorate. Such a selection procedure is strongly affirmed on normative grounds, as is reflected in a recent review of it:

...local autonomy most nearly approximates the ideals of liberal democracy by fostering diversity, freedom and significant local participation in the affairs of government. Thus it is a fundamental principle in this report that selection should continue to be made democratically, at the local level... The present system of selection admirably fulfils the fundamental principle of local autonomy.⁴

The system can be validated on more practical grounds. Branch members, it may be argued, carry out their election tasks more willingly

¹ Constitution, 1965, Clause 70.

² See Constitution, as amended to 2 March 1960, Clause 70.

³ SE, 8 May 1964.

⁴ A.A. Staley (for the Liberal Speakers Group), A Comment on the Selection of Candidates in the Liberal Party (Victorian Branch), n.d. [1967]. This report was examined by the Constitutional Committee of the State Executive, but its proposals were not recommended by that Committee for adoption (SE, 12 July 1968).

and effectively if they are working for a candidate chosen by the members of the local organisation; and it is in the interests of the whole party that they should so work. Secondly, the essentially pragmatic character of the Liberal Party favours a decentralised selection machinery and one which gives members a large amount of freedom in their choice of a candidate. No rigorous tests of a candidate's ideological fitness to represent the party are considered necessary.¹ Thirdly, it is felt that a system based on local autonomy arouses least conflict within the party organisation. With memories of 1945 in mind (and perhaps also the example of the N.S.W. Division)² there is no enthusiasm for suggestions that the Executive should have a greater say in candidate selection in order to counter elements of electorate parochialism in the present system. Thus, in 1959, an Executive sub-committee firmly opposed the idea of giving the State Executive or Council direct representation on the selection conventions. It argued that, while such a method might reduce parochial

¹ Cf.: 'Parties that centralize candidate recruitment are those with explicit ideologies and bureaucratized organisations... the party insists upon ideological conformity, and centralized selection ensures this' (Lester G. Seligman, 'Political Parties and the Recruitment of Political Leadership', in Political Leadership in Industrialized Societies, ed. Lewis J. Edinger, New York, 1967, p.312).

² Reference to the influence of the central organisation in the pre-selection of candidates in N.S.W. is to be found in: R.W. Connell and Florence Gould, Politics of the Extreme Right: Warringah 1966, Sydney, 1967, p.62; John Power (ed.), Politics in a Suburban Community. The N.S.W. State Election in Manly, 1965, Sydney, 1968, p.41. The balance of evidence, however, does not support allegations that members of the central organisation have exercised improper or excessive influence over pre-selection.

considerations, it would be 'unacceptable in Victoria' and would be resisted by branches, partly for fear that the Executive would promote the interests of favoured candidates. The committee added that: 'Any attempt to strengthen Executive control over selections would be greeted with suspicion and be of limited effectiveness'. It concluded that there was also 'no guarantee that a better choice would be made by persons having no personal knowledge of local needs'.¹

The fact that only local branch representatives take part in the activity of choosing a candidate does not mean that the Executive has no power in the selection process. The electorate convention is only one step -- though the most important one -- in this process. The checking of applicants' credentials prior to the holding of the convention and the endorsement of the selected candidate are both stages in the formal procedure of selection at which the Executive can wield its powers.

Clause 66 of the constitution allows the Executive at its discretion or at the request of the electorate committee to investigate the qualifications of applicants and report the results to the selection convention. An adverse report would, of course, seriously prejudice an individual's chances of being selected.

The Executive's most formidable power, however, rests on the distinction which is now drawn between selection and endorsement. The constitution stipulates that when the electorate convention has made its choice, the name of the selected candidate is to be forwarded to the State

¹Report of Pre-Selection Review Sub-Committee to State Executive, 4 December 1959.

Executive for endorsement. The Executive may, if it thinks fit, withhold endorsement and either demand that the convention reconsider its choice or, on the basis of a resolution passed by three-quarters of the members of the Executive, require that 'some other person' be selected.¹ By a similar vote it can also cancel an endorsement already made. In any of these events, if there is no time to choose a candidate by means of another electorate convention, the Executive itself may make the selection.²

The Executive therefore holds in reserve powers which enable it to overrule the selections made by the local organisations; but the powers are rarely used. Even the relatively mild provision for the investigation of the credentials of candidates was described in 1965 as 'in reality,... a dead letter' (a remark which referred also to the electorate committees' function in this matter).³ The sub-committee of the Executive which reviewed the party's method of pre-selecting candidates in 1959 had also noted that: 'In practice no elaborate checking is done except in the case where specific objection is raised'.⁴ Normally, then, the Executive takes little part in the recruitment and selection of candidates since, as was suggested earlier, there are strong constraints against the exercise of the central powers of the organisation in an activity where the emphasis is on local autonomy. The use of such

¹This does not mean that the Executive can require the endorsement of any particular person, but only that another selection must be made.

²Constitution, 1965, Clauses 79-82.

³Liberal Speakers Group, Survey of Organisation, 1965 (original emphasis).

⁴Report of Pre-Selection Review Sub-Committee, 4 December 1959.

powers is nearly always resisted by sections of the organisation in the electorates concerned; but the nature and effectiveness of the Executive's role in this area of party activity is best illustrated by reference to actual situations.

The party faced its first crisis before it was a year old. In September 1945, six state parliamentarians — I. Macfarlan (Brighton), W.R. Cumming (Hampden), W.H. Everard (Evelyn), W.C. Haworth (Albert Park), T.K. Maltby (Barwon), and A. Michaelis (St. Kilda) — voted to defeat the Country-Liberal coalition government under A.A. Dunstan and T.T. Hollway. Using powers specially delegated to it for the occasion by the State Council, the Executive withdrew the endorsements of all six members, thus requiring the branches in these electorates to select alternative candidates. The local organisations were immediately split. In Brighton, Albert Park, Barwon and St. Kilda sections of some branches continued to support the retiring members, while others concurred with the Executive's action and supported an 'official' Liberal candidate.

The division was deepest in Barwon. Six of the seven branches met, endorsed Maltby and resolved not to support any candidate nominated by the Executive.¹ This demonstration of branch support for Maltby frightened off one prospective local candidate who, having earlier indicated his intention of nominating, declined to stand.² However, after representatives of the State Executive had visited the adjacent

¹ Argus, 16 October 1945.

² Ibid., 17 October 1945.

Geelong electorate, R. Shirra, who had been expected to nominate for that seat, indicated that instead he had 'accepted the invitation of an influential deputation' to contest Barwon as a Liberal candidate.¹ These manoeuvres by the Executive proved to be futile. Maltby again won the seat, while Shirra's compliance did nothing to further his own parliamentary ambitions; he failed to win selection both for the Geelong state by-election in 1948, and the federal electorate of Corio in 1949.

The second occasion when the Executive used its powers in the selection process was also at a time of division in the party. The Liberal Party fought the state elections in 1952 badly split over the question of electoral reform and the action in this matter of a group of parliamentarians who followed the former leader of the party, T.T. Hollway.² Before the elections the Executive asked the electorate organisations of each of the six rebel Liberals - T.T. Hollway (Ballarat), A.H. Dennett (Caulfield), J. Don (Elsternwick), W.R. Dawmay-Mould (Dandenong), J.A. Hipworth (Swan Hill), and R.W. Tovell (Brighton) - to review the selection of its parliamentary member in the light of his alleged disloyalty to the party.³ But in 1952, as in 1945, many branch members supported their local member in defiance of the Executive, some no doubt because they agreed with the viewpoint of the Hollway group,

¹Ibid., 22 October 1945.

²See above, pp.107-8. For a more detailed account of the course of the split over the 'two-for-one' electoral reform issue see West, Power in the Liberal Party, pp.20-38.

³SE, 17 October 1952. It is relevant to remember here that before the 1953 constitutional amendments, endorsement followed automatically from a candidate's selection, and the Executive had no power (as it now has) to overrule the electorate convention by revoking the endorsement of a selected candidate.

and others out of loyalty to their parliamentary member or in defence of the principle of local autonomy. The division in the organisation undermined the effectiveness of the Executive's attempt to use the selection machinery as a disciplinary weapon - at least in the short term, for the electorate conventions re-endorsed all of the rebels except Tovell, who was defeated on the casting vote of the chairman of the convention. Moreover, in the elections six weeks later, only Dawnay-Mould and Hipworth lost their seats, Dawnay-Mould to a Labor and Hipworth to a Country Party candidate. Tovell retained his seat as an Electoral Reform League member, while in a notable coup Hollway vacated Ballarat and defeated L.G.Norman, leader of the Liberal parliamentary party, in the suburban electorate of Glen Iris.

In the following year, however, a by-election in the state electorate of Malvern provided the Executive with the opportunity to achieve, by wielding its new power of expulsion under the amended constitution, what it had failed to do through the selection process. Dawnay-Mould was expelled from the party for contesting the election against the endorsed Liberal candidate for Malvern; Tovell, Hollway, Dennett and Don suffered a similar reprisal for actively supporting Dawnay-Mould.¹

Hipworth, the remaining Hollway Liberal, was to be frozen out by different methods - though he proved disarmingly persistent. He could not be expelled in 1953 along with the other Hollway Liberals because he had played no part in the Malvern by-election. But lest the party

¹See West, p.38.

members in Swan Hill should begin to think that Hipworth's past support for the Hollway group was condoned, the Executive resolved that the field organiser in Hipworth's area 'should be given all the facts to enable him to advise the Branches' in the electorate.¹ There was an ominous note in this for Hipworth's political future. The Executive decided that Swan Hill, among several other electorates, should not be contested in the 1955 elections;² and there is no evidence that the electorate organisation (based on four branches at the most) objected to this decision or attempted to initiate the selection of a candidate. Denied the opportunity of lodging an application for party endorsement, Hipworth subsequently defied the intentions of the Executive by nominating as an Independent Liberal in 1955, but was again defeated by the Country Party candidate.

Before this, however, he had applied for endorsement for the Northern province of the Legislative Council. But the Executive rebuffed him by accepting the recommendation of a sub-committee, which had been appointed to enquire into the qualifications of candidates, that he 'was not a desirable candidate to represent the party'. It gave as its main reason for this judgement Hipworth's association with the Victorian Liberal Party - as the Hollway faction had by now been re-named.³ The Executive conveyed its view to the Northern province electorate committee (whose chairman was also a member of the State Executive), an action which, as Hipworth himself complained, 'condemned him as a suitable candidate'.⁴

¹SE, 12 August 1953.

²Ibid., 18 June 1954.

³Ibid., 16 December 1954. The Executive acted in this case under Clause 66 (i) and (iii) of the constitution.

⁴J.A. Hipworth to State Executive, SE, 14 September 1956.

When the Northern province electorate committee met as a convention early in 1955, it decided not to select any candidate;¹ but this decision was upset when two party members subsequently nominated as Independent Liberals, one of them, ironically from Hipworth's point of view, resigning from the State Executive to do so.²

Hipworth, however, did not contest the province as an Independent, although the Legislative Council elections were held three weeks after the Assembly elections. His main interest was still Swan Hill, which he had represented from 1945 to 1952, first as a Country Party member, then after 1949 as a Liberal. Twice more he canvassed the Executive's opinion as to his acceptability as a Liberal candidate; and both times he was firmly rebuffed.³ In 1958 the party again did not endorse a candidate for Swan Hill, and once more Hipworth unsuccessfully contested the seat as an Independent Liberal. Similar action in 1961 finally earned his expulsion from the party, for this time he found himself opposing an endorsed Liberal candidate, thus contravening the party's constitution.⁴

The Executive's prolonged skirmish with Hipworth had not aroused as much local opposition to central interference in the selection process as one might have expected. There are several possible reasons for this.

¹SE, 25 March 1955.

²Ibid., 3 June 1955.

³Ibid., 14 September 1956; 31 January 1958.

⁴Ibid., 15 September 1961. Hipworth's expulsion was carried overwhelmingly with forty-three out of the fifty-two who attended the Executive meeting voting in favour of it.

In the first place, there was very little branch organisation in Swan Hill and the Executive appears to have exercised a strong influence through key individuals in the electorate. Secondly, the local organisation's faith in Hipworth was undermined by his loss of the seat in 1952. After this, party members in Swan Hill could not defend Hipworth and defy the Executive, even had they wanted to, on the ground of loyalty to a sitting member. From our point of view the prime interest in the Swan Hill case is that here central action greatly reduced local choice in the selection of candidates.

The cases of Hipworth and the Hollway Liberals were particular elements of a more general party situation between 1952 and 1955 which caused the Executive to assume a far more active role in the recruitment and selection of candidates than is usual. In the aftermath of several years of internal dissension, which culminated in the party split and a crushing defeat in the 1952 elections, two problems dominated the activities of recruitment and selection: to find enough candidates, and to restore the unity of the party by ensuring that only candidates loyal to its leadership and policies were selected.

With so few Liberal members in the state parliament, after the elections of 1952, the opportunities for candidacy were more numerous than ever; but they were not on the whole favourably perceived by party members. The recruitment of candidates in 1953-4 was conducted in the shadow of past events and not the unanticipated light of the 1955 state

elections. No-one foresaw the sudden return of electoral good fortune in 1955, when, largely as a result of the split in the Labor Party, Liberal representation in the Legislative Assembly jumped from eleven to thirty-four; or rather, it was not foreseen in time to affect the recruitment of candidates. Evatt's denunciation of the right wing 'groupers' in Victoria was only made in October 1954. The A.L.P.'s Federal Conference in Hobart, at which the split was brought to a head, was held in March 1955 and the state elections followed soon after in May. But the recruitment and selection of candidates had been largely completed by the end of 1954.

The debilitated condition of the party after 1952 had a noticeable effect on recruitment; in 1953 and 1954 there was among activists an unusual absence of drive towards candidacy, for to judge from the results of the 1952 elections, relatively few could nominate with a real expectation of winning a seat in parliament. The difficulty experienced in attracting candidates helped to draw the Executive into taking a direct part in recruitment activities. Thus, soon after the 1952 elections, the Executive resolved that it would 'proceed immediately to look for suitable Candidates for all State Electorates'.¹ A year later a sub-committee consisting of several senior members of the Executive plus the deputy-leader of the state parliamentary party was set up with the task of investigating how to recruit candidates for state seats where selections had not already been made.²

¹Ibid., 14 July 1953.

²Ibid., 4 June 1954.

The problems of recruitment and selection in individual electorates showed up in various ways. In Evelyn, after no applications had been received in response to an initial appeal, one branch hopefully but unsuccessfully requested M.C. Cormack, a prominent Executive member, former president of the party and an ex-Senator, to nominate.¹ Another candidate was subsequently selected - but he withdrew. Finally, amidst an angry protest from the same branch over the part played by the Executive (the details of which are not clear), A.E. Ireland, a former member for Mernda, was endorsed.²

In a less troubled instance a state minister recalls how, in his position as a branch president, he had searched unsuccessfully in 1954 for a candidate for the electorate of Mentone.³ The seat had been held by the A.L.P. since 1950 but it was by no means a blue-ribbon Labor electorate and the Liberals had won it in 1947. Nonetheless, attempts to recruit a candidate by means of personal persuasion failed. The minister submitted his own name, was unopposed at the selection convention, and won the seat which he retained from 1955 to 1967 when, as a result of the state redistribution, he became the parliamentary member for Frankston.

Several other electorates, all of which were to be captured by the Liberal Party in 1955, attracted no nominations when these were first called for. Late in 1954, for example, it was necessary to re-open applications for the seats of Hawthorn and Dundas (both held by Labor

¹Minutes of Greensborough branch, 5 April 1954.

²Ibid., 18 April 1955.

³Interview with the Hon. E.R. Meagher, 1967.

members) and Caulfield (whose sitting member was A.H. Dennett, a member of Hollway's Victorian Liberal Party).¹

The second aspect of recruitment to concern the Executive after the decimation of the state party was that of the candidates' credentials. In 1954 a committee of senior party members was appointed to investigate the qualifications of applicants for endorsement. It comprised H.E. Bolte, the leader of the state parliamentary party, J.M. Anderson, the president, Mesdames C. Couchman and R. Austin, the women vice-presidents, J.F. Patrick, the metropolitan male vice-president and R.N. Stokes, a foundation member of the party.² Senior office bearers had been appointed to qualifications committees before this one, of course. Nonetheless, it was a far more prestigious body than the previous larger committees,³ and represented a more serious approach to this aspect of recruitment than was to be taken in the future. Thus, in 1956, the practice of appointing a special committee to vet the credentials of candidates ceased. Thereafter the Emergency Committee⁴ was to be empowered to act in this role.

¹SE, 8 October 1954. It is interesting in the context of the Executive's recruitment role that the candidate finally endorsed for Hawthorn, J.W. Manson, had been the party's public relations officer from 1949 and is the only paid party official to have become a parliamentarian.

²Ibid., 10 September 1954.

³E.g., *ibid.*, 29 September 1950; 28 September 1951; 17 October 1952.

⁴Ibid., 14 September 1956. This is also sometimes referred to as the President's Standing Committee. Its personnel varies, but in 1956 it included the president, the four vice-presidents, the chairman of the Women's Section, and the leader and deputy-leader of the parliamentary party.

Furthermore, it has already been pointed out that by 1959 the checking of candidates' qualifications was regarded as an unimportant step in their recruitment, and was rarely carried out.¹

As we have seen, one of the first tasks of the qualifications committee in 1954 was to rebuff Hipworth's attempt to gain selection in Swan Hill. In another case that year the Executive used its power to intervene in the selection process more gently. It requested the electorate committee in the state district of Caulfield East to reconsider its selection of A.J. Fraser;² but when a second convention confirmed its original choice, the Executive endorsed Fraser without further opposition.³

The recruitment and selection problems experienced between 1952 and 1955 did not last, nor, consequently, did the Executive's amplified role in these activities. Since 1955 recruitment has been carried out under favourable and stable electoral and organisational conditions. Not only has there been no need for the Executive to exercise its powers, but on the main occasion when it did wield them again the outcome merely strengthened the constraints which already existed against such action.

In 1960 R.H. Suggett, M.L.A. (Moorabbin), was convicted of indecent behaviour. Immediately after his conviction J.M. Anderson, the party's treasurer and a former state president, accompanied by the general secretary, visited Suggett to discuss with him his future in the party. The Executive subsequently agreed that it would not take any

¹Above, p.292.

²SE, 8 October 1954.

³Ibid., 9 November 1954.

action until after an appeal against the conviction had been heard.¹ Suggett appealed and the conviction, a very minor one, was quashed. Throughout the incident he remained a member of the parliamentary party and, in fact, was its secretary. Nonetheless, in August, the Executive called on the Moorabbin electorate committee to reconsider Suggett's selection.² When the convention re-affirmed its choice of Suggett the Executive (by twenty-eight votes out of thirty-five members present at the meeting) exercised its power to require the selection of 'some other person'.³ In effect the Executive served the local organisation notice that Suggett would not be endorsed if the convention chose him a third time. Nominations were again called and this time the convention selected W.L. Reese, whom the Executive endorsed.⁴

Predictably, the Executive's action caused trouble. The Moorabbin branches were divided in their support between the endorsed candidate and Suggett. Members in other electorates also dissented from the Executive's decision.⁵ The principle of local autonomy in the selection of candidates was strongly reaffirmed by those who criticised the part played by the Executive. The Burwood branch, for example, wrote to the State Executive requesting that it reconsider its refusal to endorse Suggett on the ground that:

the rights of the individual after being twice selected were being over-ridden and the rights of the electorate

¹Ibid., 29 January 1960.

²Ibid., 12 August 1960. See Constitution, Clause 82 (ii).

³SE, 9 September 1960.

⁴Ibid., 7 October 1960.

⁵Ibid.

committees and conventions were being ignored without adequate justification.¹

At the next meeting of the State Council two branch resolutions also attacked the Executive's action, claiming that it had been a denial of 'the right' of the electorate organisation to choose its own candidate and so a violation of 'basic Liberal principles'.² On this occasion, however, the voice of principle was soon gagged when a Council delegate successfully moved that the two resolutions be not heard.³

In Moorabbin, as to some extent in the previous cases of Executive interference in local selections in 1945 and 1952, the purpose of the Executive's action was defeated. Thus, Suggett, campaigning as an unendorsed Liberal -- though emphasising that he was the retiring parliamentary member -- defeated Reese and retained his seat. A motion before the Executive to expel him from the party for opposing an endorsed Liberal candidate was also unsuccessful.⁴ Support from the parliamentary wing, which had objected to the Executive's refusal to endorse Suggett in the first place,⁵ doubtless contributed to the swing in his favour on the Executive.

The wisdom if not the validity of the Executive's action in pursuing a campaign against Suggett was highly doubtful when seen in

¹Minutes of Burwood branch, 28 September 1960.

²Age, 23 February 1961.

³Ibid., 2 March 1961.

⁴SE, 15 September 1961.

⁵Age, 8 October 1960.

relation to the party's principle of local autonomy in the selection of candidates. Considering that Suggett had not committed any breaches of party discipline and that his appeal against his conviction had been upheld, the Executive seems unjustified in having used its authority beyond requesting the local organisation to review its selection. Under the circumstances, to insist on the selection of an alternative candidate was a clumsy assertion of central powers which aroused bitterness and achieved nothing. The Moorabbin case, however, demonstrated to the Executive that its veto power over local selections was a blunt weapon by itself. Accordingly, the constitution was amended to provide for automatic expulsion of members who contest an election against officially endorsed candidates.¹ By raising the penalty for defiance, this rule strengthens the Executive's power to withhold endorsement from a selected candidate. Moreover, it removes from the Executive members the distasteful responsibility of deciding whether or not to expel a member who, like Suggett, has defied the machine and yet won re-election.

The complementary procedures of veto and automatic expulsion were used against a state parliamentarian in 1963. The circumstances, however, were quite different from those which had obtained in Moorabbin and there was no opposition to the Executive's action from the local organisation. Indeed, it is likely that the three branches concerned would have demanded the action that the Executive took; and there is little doubt it acted only after leading activists in the local organisation had been consulted.

¹Constitution, Clause 86 (ii).

Towards the end of 1963, P.W. Garrison, M.L.A. (Hawthorn), found himself facing four charges under the Companies' Act and resigned from the parliamentary party.¹ The Executive cancelled his endorsement and a new candidate was selected for the 1964 election.² Garrison then expelled himself by contesting as an Independent Liberal, but he gained fewer than 10 per cent of the primary vote and the seat was won by the official Liberal candidate. The exercise of central authority had worked smoothly in this instance, for, unlike Suggett, Garrison lacked influential support either from his parliamentary colleagues or from the members of the organisation. Garrison's popularity had been waning for several years, although not sufficiently to cause the party to withdraw his endorsement for the state elections in July 1961. Nevertheless, in May of that year his effectiveness as a parliamentarian had been discussed by a branch in an adjacent electorate. Hawthorn voters were also reputed to be dissatisfied with his apparent neglect of the electorate and the Deputy-Premier and other government members were said to be 'aware of the situation'.³

The Executive, then, has ultimate power to decide not who shall, but who shall not, be the endorsed candidate for any electorate. Under favourable and stable electoral and organisational conditions there is little for the Executive to do in the recruitment and selection of candidates. When the Executive does interfere in the selection process the success of its action in the short term is highly situational. In

¹Age, 9 October 1963.

²SE, 13 December 1963.

³Minutes of North Camberwell branch, 1 May 1961.

the longer term, however, the Executive's control over endorsement can make or break a member's parliamentary career. Even if it is rarely used, the Executive's power has a significant disciplinary value.

THE ELECTORATE CONVENTION

We turn now to a closer look at the selection process in the electorates. Selection conventions are not held in all electorates before every election. In electorates already represented by a Liberal parliamentarian the retiring member is automatically re-endorsed unless more than one-fifth of the branches in his seat request a convention, in which case applicants for endorsement will be called for by the Executive in the normal way. Secondly, in electorates where a lack of branches prevents a convention from being held, the Executive selects and endorses a candidate.

The formal machinery of the selection process is set in motion by press advertisements calling for applications from members for endorsement in specified electorates. When nominations have closed, all applications for an electorate are sent to the relevant electorate committees. The committees and the Executive may investigate the qualifications of the applicants and the results of this investigation will be reported to the convention. The electorate committee, however, has 'no authority to make any recommendation as to who should be the selected Candidate'.¹ Before the convention is called, branch representatives are provided with

¹Victorian Division, Rules for the Guidance of Electorate Committees, 1956 (mimeo).

a copy of each candidate's application. This document contains a summary of the personal details (age, marital status, education, occupational experience, war service, defence and patriotic activities) of the candidate together with a record of his party activities and general experience in politics, local government and community affairs. The application will normally be supported by two or three testimonials from well-known citizens or Liberal M.P.s, and may also be accompanied by a brief statement in which the candidate explains why he considers himself to be an appropriate person to contest the seat.

Strict rules govern the conduct of a convention, which is presided over by the chairman of the electorate committee. The general secretary or his assistant and several members of the staff of the Central Office attend to check that branches have not exceeded their rightful number of representatives, supervise the running of the convention, and assist with the ballot at the end.¹ The doors are locked and may not open again for many hours, depending on the number of applicants seeking pre-selection.² The approved ritual of a convention has been set out in a guide authorised by the State Executive, thus:

HEADQUARTERS REPRESENTATIVE. Checks admission of Branch Representatives at entrance.

¹Ibid.

²E.g., in 1951 the selection of a candidate from the thirty-five applicants for Balaclava took 'more than ten hours' (Argus, 25 June 1951). The convention for the Legislative Council province of East Yarra in 1964 was another marathon effort of eight hours (Age, 13 February 1964). There is therefore some substance in the Speakers Group's complaint that pre-selection sometimes becomes 'a lottery, an endurance and a product of exhaustion' (Survey of Organisation, 1965).

God Save the Queen.

CHAIRMAN. Instructs doors to be locked.

Welcomes Branch Representatives to the Convention and explains purpose and procedure of Convention.

Announces the names of Candidates.

Announces - (a) Order in which Candidates will speak.

[This has been determined by lot before the convention begins.] (b) Time allowed each Candidate to address Convention, including questions and answers. (This should be arranged at an Electorate Committee Meeting prior to the Convention).

APPOINTMENT. Appointment of the Returning Officer and Scrutineers.

CHAIRMAN. Reads report of Electorate Committee on Candidates.

CHAIRMAN. Announces each Candidate in turn.

CANDIDATES. Candidates enter the Convention room in turn, address Representatives, answer questions and retire.

HEADQUARTERS REPRESENTATIVE. Explains Exhaustive Ballot. Checks attendance of Representatives from Branches in the Electorate against admission cards, and notifies Chairman of number of branches represented and Representatives present.

BALLOT PAPERS. ...are distributed and collected.

COUNT OF VOTES ...

RESULT OF COUNT... is made known to the Chairman by the Returning officer, and then announces (sic) the result to the Convention by reading the signed declaration of the poll without disclosing any figures.

CHAIRMAN. Calls all Candidates before the Convention and announces the result of the pre-selection, congratulates the selected Candidate, and makes some appropriate reference to losing Candidates.

Advises Convention that the name of the selected Candidate will be submitted to the State Executive for endorsement.

Requests Representatives to ensure that their Branches do everything possible to secure the return of the selected...Candidate.

Declares meeting closed.¹

¹Rules for the Guidance of Electorate Committees.

The size of a convention is obviously determined by the number of branches in the electorate. Conventions therefore vary widely between state and federal electorates and between poorly and well-organised areas. In a large, well-organised federal electorate like Corangamite or Deakin a convention may involve 200-250 representatives, but eighty to 150 is more typical. State electorate conventions are smaller, most falling in the range forty to eighty.¹ In any electorate, however, a convention involves a large proportion of the party members who are active in the local organisation. For it should be remembered that while every branch is entitled to at least ten convention representatives, the great majority of branch meetings are attended by fewer than fifteen persons.² The interest, excitement and responsibility of selecting a candidate are thus experienced at some time or another by most activists; and a candidate selected at a convention undoubtedly represents the choice of a majority of active party members in the electorate.

In metropolitan electorates conventions are often attended by the maximum number of representatives from each branch. Understandably, however, it is more difficult in country electorates to bring together a large group of people in one place at a specified time. At a convention in Evelyn in 1959, for example, of the twelve branches taking part, only two were reported to be fully represented.³ There may be geographical reasons why not all of a branch's representatives attend the convention,

¹One of the smallest on record must be the convention at Swan Hill in 1952 when twelve attended (Argus, 10 November 1952).

²See above, p.166.

³Minutes of Eltham branch, 30 April 1957.

or it may be that the branch simply cannot find ten persons available on the night. The Lorne branch serves to illustrate such organisational problems: formed in October 1955, it had a membership of thirty-seven in 1956. At its seven meetings in 1955-6 attendance ranged from four to eight members. It is not surprising then that in 1956 only four representatives from the branch attended a convention at Colac, thirty-six miles from Lorne.¹

Norms of fair play and impartiality are diffused throughout the selection process. Sometimes these norms are embodied in the formal rules of procedure, at other times they exist merely as unwritten and roughly-acknowledged codes of behaviour.

As laid down by the rules, voting at a convention is by secret and exhaustive ballot. Branches are forbidden by the constitution from binding their representatives to vote for any particular candidate. Clause 76 states: 'Votes shall be cast by Representatives in accordance with their own judgement, free of any direction, restriction, or undertaking whatsoever'.² According to the rules, therefore, members attend a convention as representatives, but not as delegates, of their branches. They are supposed to come with an open mind and vote according to their own evaluation of the candidate's qualifications, platform skill and suitability for the electorate. Clause 76 was added to the constitution in 1956 in order to give explicit expression to this long-standing principle.³ It was designed to check the practice adopted by some

¹Minutes of Lorne branch, 15 November 1956.

²Constitution, 1965.

³SE, 7 October 1955; SC, 29-30 February 1956.

branches of openly instructing their representatives whom they should vote for. On several occasions, for example, the Colac branch required its representatives to vote en bloc for the candidate favoured by the branch committee.¹ Similarly, in 1954, the Eltham branch committee discussed 'the merits' of the persons who had applied for selection in Evelyn, and decided on an order of preference. Convention representatives who were not already members of the branch committee were invited to attend the committee meeting. Although it was reported that they were unable to do so, it was further noted that they had 'expressed willingness to abide by the decisions of the Committee'.²

The effect of Clause 76 on the selection process must not be exaggerated. It states a valued principle and in respect to this it inhibits the most blatant of branch malpractices. But it does not stop branch members at their meetings from appraising the candidates, nor from informally agreeing among themselves as to which candidate they prefer and in what order they are likely to vote for the others. An impending selection convention naturally arouses much interest and considerable discussion among branch members. Consequently most representatives arrive at the convention with a fairly definite scale of preferences for the candidates, though their order of priorities may well become blurred when, as is often the case, there are six or more aspirants for selection.

¹Minutes of Colac branch, 2 July 1953; 18 October 1956.

²Minutes of Eltham branch, 14 October 1954.

In reality, therefore, the electorate conventions lie somewhere between the hypothetical extremes of a gathering of open-minded members on the one hand and a collection of branch-directed delegations on the other. Above all, it is naive to imagine that the selection process begins only when the doors are locked behind the assembled representatives. In fact it 'begins' as soon as the nominations are known to branch members - and perhaps even before that. For most activists have a shrewd idea of who in the local organisation are 'interested in a seat' and are forming opinions about them well before a convention is necessary.

It follows then that the voting at a convention is not completely unstructured. Block voting by branches for their favoured candidate occurs, especially in the first ballot, but as candidates are eliminated in successive ballots the pattern of voting is more fluid. At any sizable convention which has to choose between, say, eight or more candidates there is always an element of uncertainty over who, among several supposed 'leading contenders', will be selected. Every convention must be regarded as a unique event, the outcome of which is the result of many factors. Concepts of candidacy such as 'favourite son', 'leading contender', 'Executive nominee', 'Women's Section's candidate', 'local candidate' and others, add interest to a convention but are not highly reliable indicators of who will win.

It is not the practice to announce the voting figures at conventions, though they often soon become known, the candidates themselves often being anxious to find out how they fared - and to infer from this what chance they may have in future pre-selections. Because of

the official secrecy of the selection ballot, adequately-documented examples of the pattern of voting at conventions are difficult to locate and one rather sketchy account must serve to illustrate some of the qualities of a convention.¹

There were thirteen applicants for the federal electorate of Deakin in 1965. The size of the field indicates that it was regarded as an attractive electorate in which to win pre-selection, being a fairly safe Liberal seat which the party had held since 1949. The convention was a large one also, for there were twenty-three branches in this suburban and semi-rural area. Among the candidates were a former Senator for Victoria, George Hannan, 'X' (a member of the State Executive), 'Y' a strong local candidate) and the present M.P. for Deakin, A. Jarman, who, at the time of the convention, was president of a branch in the electorate. Before the convention Jarman estimated that, at the worst, he would come in the first four. With the help of ten 'assured' votes from his own branch, he thus located himself among a group of identifiable 'leading contenders'. He calculated that the ex-Senator, although not living in the electorate, would probably provide the toughest opposition. When addressing the convention he therefore argued that the electors would react unfavourably if an 'outsider' were chosen as the party's candidate. At an important stage in the ballot, when a number of the weaker candidates had been eliminated, he thought that the ex-Senator was

¹Based on information gained during interviews, 1967, and reinforced by the writer's own observation of the pre-selection for the new federal electorate of Diamond Valley, 30 October 1968. One condition of observing this convention was that the writer should not divulge the details of the ballots.

in the lead with 'X', 'Y' and himself commanding roughly equal votes. 'Y' was then eliminated and his supporters transferred their votes to Jarman, thus ensuring his selection. It is thought that 'Y' himself had suggested to his supporters that they regard Jarman as their second choice.

Although some of the details of this example are necessarily conjectural it illustrates several of the typical characteristics of the process of selection by convention. First, among a fairly large number of applicants, there is also a small group widely regarded as comprising the 'leading contenders', and among them a 'favoured candidate'. Secondly, the pattern of voting is at least partly branch-structured. Thirdly, selection by convention involves a marked degree of uncertainty as to the outcome among the leading contenders, especially when a number of ballots are required to determine the winner and the preconceived order of preference of many representatives is disturbed by the successive elimination of candidates.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT MAN

What are the criteria of selection? What factors help branch representatives to prefer one candidate to another? These are large questions which to some extent are the concern of psychology. But we can at least begin to answer them by considering the kind of party the Liberals belong to and, most of all, the organisational setting for the recruitment and selection of candidates. Largely, but not entirely, deriving from these broad factors, there are three inter-related sets of criteria by which candidates are judged: (1) those relating to the dominant social value-preferences of Liberals - the candidate's social, occupational,

educational and religious attributes, his place in the community and his personal characteristics; (2) those relating to the needs of the roles, which the candidate seeks to occupy, of parliamentarian and local member - his political skills and resources; (3) his status and activities in the party.

It cannot be assumed, however, that these criteria operate in a rational way to ensure the selection of any particular candidate. Many personal and parochial considerations influence the branch representatives' perceptions of these criteria as they apply to each candidate. Their preferences will be partly determined, for example, by their acquaintance with some candidates and not others, by impressions gained at the State Council or electorate committees, by the opinions of their friends, prominent party members and parliamentarians, and many other factors.

When recruiting and selecting candidates, the Liberal Party functions more as a social group than as an ideological or programmatic party. The social homogeneity of the party and its relatively weak inclination (at least compared with the A.L.P.) to develop distinctions along a left-right scale minimise the importance of policy issues in the selection process.¹ Moreover, since 1955, there has been almost no intra-party conflict in Victoria to heighten the tensions of pre-selection. Personalities rather than party policies are at stake in the electorate conventions; questions on policy thrown at candidates from the floor of

¹Cf., however, the importance of the policy orientations of the two main candidates at the Warringah (N.S.W.) election in 1966 (Connell and Gould, Politics of the Extreme Right, especially Chs. 6, 7).

the convention are contrived as much to test their platform skill as to determine the content of their political beliefs.¹ Sometimes, on topical political issues, such as Commonwealth - state relations, a 'right' or 'wrong' answer is patently evident for the occasion, but for the most part articulate and plausible replies and a confident demeanour are the locked-for attributes in a candidate.

From time to time the view is expressed that the party needs to recruit 'the right man' or, as a variant, that the existing procedures have failed to recruit enough of the right men. Party activists tell themselves that they should 'be constantly on the lookout for persons who would make good members of parliament' and should encourage these persons to offer themselves for selection.² But it is impossible to give explicit formulation to such persons. Liberals think of their ideal candidate in terms of such desirable personal qualities as integrity, moral rectitude and ability (the latter usually relating to educational attainment). Some party members display the kind of "'managerial" thinking' about politics referred to by Mayer, Loveday and Westerway,³ and look to the business community to provide politicians who combine the previous virtues with the businessman's supposed attributes of drive, efficiency and organising ability. Status factors are also important: desirable

¹Cf., the account of a pre-selection convention in N.S.W. 'Ordeal in Ash Street: When N.S.W. Liberals Select a Candidate', S.M.H., 5 June 1964.

²Report of Section of Candidates Committee to State Executive, 7 October 1955.

³Henry Mayer, Peter Loveday, Peter Westerway, 'Images of Politics: An Analysis of Letters to the Press on the Richardson Report', in Australian Politics: A Reader, ed. Henry Mayer, Melbourne, 1966, p.429.

candidates are persons of 'repute' or 'standing' in the community. Yet the Liberal Party is not, although it would like to be, a party of 'notables' in the Duvergerian sense, attracting candidates who, because of their 'social and professional position', have 'weight independent of their mere place in the party hierarchy'.¹

Liberals thus sketch their ideal candidate in terms of their own cultural values, though these are not necessarily the consciously operative criteria at an electorate convention. While the branch representatives' assessment of a candidate takes account of these 'paper qualifications', usually all of the applicants can be expected to measure up satisfactorily to such broad cultural standards. Although eminence is an advantage it would be difficult to pick the winner of a convention on the basis only of the applicants' social and occupational prestige.

What is the relationship between activism and candidacy? In the opinion of the pseudonymous Moira Fenton, Victorian Liberal Party organiser, 'most of the ones who look for office in the party are doing it as a stepping-stone to a parliamentary seat'.² To what extent has the party organisation given rise to criteria by which candidates are selected? Victoria has by far the most demanding prerequisite of party membership for candidacy among the Liberal state Divisions. The constitution stipulates that applicants for selection must have been

¹D.W. Brogan in forward to Duverger, Political Parties, p.vii.

²A.F. Davies, Private Politics: A Study of Five Political Outlooks, Carlton, Victoria, 1966, p.13.

financial members of the Liberal Party of Australia (not specifically the Victorian Division) for twelve months 'immediately preceding the closing of applications'.¹ Admittedly the Executive is able to grant special permission for applicants who do not meet this condition to face a convention, and it frequently does so.² But the rule did not exist before 1950. It is plausible, therefore, to infer that its introduction indicated a desire to internalise further the recruitment of candidates and expressed the attitude that good organisational activists are likely to make the best, or at least the most reliable, party candidates. Activists with parliamentary ambitions of course want activism to lead to candidacy -- and often behave as though it is a reward to be conferred on them for their contribution to the organisation. Significantly the idea of the twelve months membership requirement originated in one of the party's main recruiting structures - the Liberal Speakers Group. It is consistent with this that among party members a popular explanation for a display of organisational enthusiasm by a fellow activist is that he is 'interested in getting a seat'. The relationship between activism

¹ Constitution, 1965, Clause 61. The next most demanding party Division is South Australia which stipulates thirty days. Other Divisions simply specify that candidates must be members of the party.

² An example of a parliamentarian who won his seat after being granted special permission under Clause 61 to seek selection when he had been a member of the party for less than a year is B. Dixon, M.L.A. (St. Kilda). Dixon, well-known at the time as a football player, won selection in 1963 ahead of thirteen other candidates, including two local branch presidents, two other active party members, who have since risen to places on the State Executive, and W.F.L. Reese, who had been the Liberal candidate in Moorabbin two years earlier.

and candidacy, however, is more complicated if we consider the possibility that a member's organisational activities may not be perceived by him as instrumental in winning selection, but are compensatory for having failed to do so in the past.

Certainly there is a general relationship between activism and candidacy: it is rare for persons without a background of active party membership to win selection. But the relationship is not systematic. One cannot predict a candidate's chances of being selected from his place or background in the organisation. A sound record of activism is a major criterion for selection, but not a pre-eminent one. As with a candidate's social characteristics, many other factors reinforce or countervail the importance attached to his specific party activities by branch representatives as they cast their votes.

The relationship between activism and candidacy is evident by the high proportion of selected candidates who have occupied roles in the middle and upper echelons of the organisation. Most persons with parliamentary ambitions have at some time acted as office bearers of branches or electorate committees or have attended the State Council. A significant proportion reach the level of State Executive and/or supplement their activism in the middle echelons of the local organisations by joining the Liberal Speakers Group or achieving prominence in the Young Liberal Movement. Very few candidates on the other hand are selected from the ranks of ordinary branch members and committee members.

Yet it would be wrong to think of the hierarchical structure of the organisation as a ladder up which activists climb to candidacy and

parliament. Such a model, it is suggested, assumes too positive and systematic a relationship between activism and candidacy. In particular, the candidate who is also a member of the State Executive is in an ambiguous position. On the one hand, prominence in the central institutions of the party not only adds to a member's prestige, but, by making him more widely known, spreads his opportunities to win selection among a number of electorates. Persons in the upper echelons of the party have a greater versatility in seeking seats than those whose reputation is confined to one local organisation. On the other hand, some believe that members of the Executive are at a disadvantage. There are several reasons for this view. We have already referred to the importance attached to the principle of local autonomy in the selection of candidates and, as a corollary of this, to cases of tension between the Executive and the local organisations. As is likely in any structure based on semi-autonomous local units, there exists among some members of the Liberal Party an easily-aroused suspicion of the authority of the Executive¹ and a certain

¹E.g., the opinions expressed in the following extract from the minute book of the Greensborough branch:

Mrs. - expressed her disapproval of the Executive having too much power. The Chairman endorsed this. He was of the opinion that regional committees should meet more regularly and gain power to veto actions of the Executive. He felt it was a negation of liberalism for rank and file members not to think more of politics, and to allow the members of the Executive to feel they were the sole brains of the Party. He was ashamed of the amended Constitution...

(Minutes, 13 April 1953. See also, *ibid.*, 20 July, 28 September 1953; 8 November 1955).

The 'amended constitution', it should be recalled, increased the powers of the Executive in several areas of party activity.

popular disdain for the apparent 'cliquishness' of its members. The Executive member who seeks selection is, more than most others, prone to be regarded as unduly ambitious, especially when he competes with local activists for endorsement in an electorate with which he has not previously been directly associated. Branch activists do not like to think that a candidate regards their electorate merely as an object of his personal ambition; he must counter such attitudes by communicating his special sense of identification with the electorate.¹ In addition, it is sometimes argued that Executive members become too well known. Under the glare of prominence at the State Council and in other party institutions they can alienate as well as attract wide support.² Nonetheless, the men on the Executive have, as a group, been relatively successful in winning selection. Of fifty-one who are known to have been applicants for endorsement at different times, only six have never been selected. But it must be remembered that this good record is not a simple measure of the importance of Executive membership as a criterion of selection; it reflects also the persistence with which men in the upper

¹Prominence within the electorate is an advantage but by no means always a sufficient one; e.g., see Lionel Dunk, 'Liberals upset by Corio selection', Age, 31 October 1968.

²The case of the Diamond Valley (1968) pre-selection supports this contention. In a convention that extended to ten ballots before the winner emerged, three of the four candidates who were, or had been, members of the Executive were among the six contenders to be eliminated in the first three ballots, two of them, in fact, in the first ballot. (The rules for the conduct of the exhaustive ballot provide for the elimination of all candidates receiving fewer than four votes when there are: (a) more than ten candidates involved; (b) more than five branches represented.)

echelons pursue their parliamentary ambitions -- if they have any.

When all background criteria have been considered, the platform style of the candidate during his brief (usually five-minute) address to the assembled representatives and his handling of the few questions from the floor may be of crucial importance in his winning selection. Many parliamentarians agree that it is. Certainly an impeccable background and a solid record of activism will be insufficient to impress the representatives if the candidate loses composure or somehow bungles his performance. Rawson's and Holtzinger's conclusion about the choice of the Liberal candidate in Eden-Monaro equally sums up the majority of Victorian selection conventions: 'Flanagan was selected because, on the day, he made the most favourable impression on the delegates as a prospective parliamentary candidate...'¹

The Liberal Party's method of selecting candidates by means of electorate conventions dominates the self-recruitment strategies of members. Since candidates are selected by activists in the local organisations, it is they whom the applicants for endorsement must impress. For politically ambitious activists hopeful of winning selection, building up goodwill in the party may influence their organisational activities for many years. More specific forms of canvassing for support by recruits, however, begin in earnest once nominations have been called for in an electorate. Visits to branches, introductions to leading electorate activists, the backing of a parliamentarian or an influential

¹D.W. Rawson and Susan M. Holtzinger, Politics in Eden-Monaro, London, 1958, p.61.

member of the organisation (who perhaps hopes that 'X' branch will 'do the right thing by' 'Y' candidate) are the stock techniques. The more obvious possible excesses of log-rolling are ruled out by the constitution: as we saw, branches cannot bind their representatives to vote for a particular candidate, while, because of Clause 70, it is difficult if not impossible for a candidate to 'pack' the convention in his favour by such methods as a hasty enrolment of members in a branch, or the creation of a new one, immediately prior to the convention.

The approved norms of the party further restrict the nature and extent of canvassing activities. Especially in the earlier years of the party's existence there was a strong feeling among some members that campaigning for support among the branches was an unethical practice: it was likely to give some contenders, and not always the most deserving ones, an unwarrantable advantage over others, thus detracting from the impartiality of the selection process and perhaps obscuring 'the right man'. In 1947 two branches went so far as to discuss the possibility of having candidates disqualified if they were found to have been canvassing for support; but deciding that this would be an extreme measure, one branch resolved as an alternative that 'all candidates should be informed that canvassing among convention members would be viewed with disfavour by the Electoral Committee'.¹ This practice, the same branch intoned on a later occasion, was 'a gravely improper proceeding in a matter, the rectitude of which it feels to be of the utmost importance in the public

¹Minutes of Deepdene branch, 3 March 1947.

relations of the party'.¹ The indignation of the Young Liberals was also aroused by the lobbying activities of candidates. They urged that any candidate 'known to have used this practice [should] be considered unfit to represent the Party in Parliament'.² But the Executive was forced to admit in a reply to yet another complaint from a branch member that it was impossible to prevent all forms of canvassing.³ Members at the present time appear to be less intolerant of lobbying than they once were -- perhaps because they have become used to candidates quietly soliciting support among the branches. Nevertheless, party norms still have a restrictive effect on such practices: members canvass informally (no dodgers, rallies or other blatant devices) and somewhat covertly -- and may be reluctant to admit to having canvassed at all.

Ever since the party was formed, Liberal activists have placed a high value on cohesion and loyalty among their parliamentary representatives. At different times they have advocated strong disciplinary measures in order to achieve these. Typical was a branch resolution submitted to the State Council in 1946, which proposed that candidates sign an undertaking that if elected they would abide by the majority decision of either the state or federal parliamentary party.⁴ Again, in 1948, one of the party's most active branches resolved (on a motion moved by a future Legislative Councillor, G.J. Nicol, and seconded by a future Senator, G. Hannan) 'that discipline over both State and Federal members

¹Ibid., 7 July 1948.

²Minutes of Central Committee of Young Liberal Movement, 29 July 1954.

³SE, 14 December 1956.

⁴SC, 26 November 1946.

be more strict and that these members be brought under the direct control of the Party as a whole'.¹ Even though such proposals were not implemented they are evidence of attitudes conducive to the expansion of ^{the} disciplinary powers of the party's extra-parliamentary wing. And we have seen that, in 1953, as a result of a period of disunity in the party, the State Executive was given such powers through the endorsement mechanism. A member of the State Executive has interpreted the importance of this to the party as follows:

...if left outside a party discipline, no unity or coherence would be found simply by relying on an attachment to liberal principles. It is the party discipline which enables Liberal members to function as a government, similarly to the Labor Party, and the sanction by which the conformity is obtained is the same as that of the Labor Party, namely, the withdrawal of endorsement or expulsion.²

A function of the Liberal Party's extra-parliamentary organisation, then, is to strengthen the cohesion of the parliamentary party. It performs this function above all by dominating the activities involved in the recruitment of parliamentary candidates. The Victorian party has evolved a distinctive method of recruiting and selecting its parliamentary candidates: the electorates exercise a large amount of local autonomy, thus gratifying the canons of organisational democracy that members are anxious to perceive in their party. At the same time the Executive's power over endorsement tightens the disciplinary aspect of the otherwise decentralised selection procedures.

¹Minutes of Darling-East Malvern branch, 5 October 1948.

²Minority Report of State Council Resolutions Sub-Committee, July 1959.

CHAPTER 11

PARLIAMENTARIANS AND ACTIVISTS

RE-SELECTION

What the branches confer they can also withhold. A retiring Liberal parliamentarian is not automatically the party's endorsed candidate for his electorate in subsequent elections. Rather, this depends upon his retaining the support of a majority of the branches in his electorate. A year or more before an election is due the Central Office notifies the branches in those electorates represented in parliament by a Liberal member that before a specified date they must state whether they desire nominations for selection to be called.¹ If more than one fifth of the branches in an electorate so wish, the parliamentary member must face pre-selection again; if a majority of the branches are satisfied with their member (which is usually the case) he is automatically re-endorsed by the Executive. The non-response of a branch is regarded as approval of the sitting member's re-endorsement. The onus is thus on the branches to communicate their dissatisfaction.

For this purpose branches are officially required to hold general meetings and conduct a secret ballot; but, more often than not, if a branch holds the required general meeting before the specified date it will pass a unanimous resolution in favour of re-endorsing the member. On at least

¹Constitution, 1965, Clause 83 (i), (ii).

one occasion, however, the committee of the Kew South East branch felt justified in dispensing with this procedure when re-affirming their 'utmost confidence' in their parliamentary member -- the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies -- and indicated to the general secretary that 'there was no necessity in convening a Branch meeting to discuss the matter'.¹ The Lorne branch² on the other hand took its responsibilities more literally. It not only called a special general meeting to consider the re-selection of the M.P. for Corangamite, E.D. Mackinnon, but it invited branch members who did not intend to come to the meeting to return their notice papers with the words 'yes' or 'no' written on them. The idea worked well: five people attended the meeting (a typical attendance), but nineteen papers were returned and the voting was twenty-four in favour of Mackinnon to none against.³ Shortly after, the branch repeated the procedure for its state members -- with similar results: four came to the meeting and twenty-five postal votes were received giving unanimous approval of their re-endorsement.⁴

Some branch activists advocate that as a matter of principle sitting members should face a new selection convention before each election, believing that this will keep the member 'on his toes' in relation to the local organisation;⁵ and probably more would act on this

¹Minutes of Kew South East branch, 19 August 1957.

²Located in a beach resort on the south-west coast.

³Minutes of Lorne branch, 23 May 1963. Membership of the branch at the time was approximately fifty (ibid., 11 April 1963).

⁴Ibid., 11 July 1963.

⁵E.g., members of the Burwood branch (Chisholm). Thus in 1950 the branch passed a motion of confidence in its federal member, Sir Wilfred Kent Hughes, and then resolved that applications for endorsement be called.

principle were they not reluctant to give the impression of being dissatisfied with their member and so attract unwarranted publicity. As it is, parliamentarians are insulated from the high principles and the harassment of a few branches by the rule requiring at least one fifth of the branches in their electorates to call for the holding of a selection convention. In most state electorates this means two or possibly three branches and usually double that number for federal electorates. Thus, while it is common for individual activists within branches, and individual branches within electorates, to press for a convention,¹ rarely does a sitting member actually have to contest a selection ballot.

Branches have sometimes used their selection rights to register a protest against governmental policies, though this too is a rare enough occurrence to have curiosity value rather than any political significance. In 1960, for example, dissatisfied with the federal government's economic policies, an unpopular rise in parliamentarians' salaries, and the passage through federal parliament of the controversial Matrimonial Causes Bill, several branches resolved not to recommend the automatic re-endorsement of their respective federal and state members.² While this protest from below was irritating and mildly embarrassing for the parliamentarians concerned, none was in any real danger of losing his official candidacy as a result of it.

¹Some recent examples are: Kew North East branch, 4 March 1966; Greythorn branch, 6 April 1966; Deepdene branch, 18 April 1966; Burwood branch, 30 March 1966.

²Age, 30 March, 22 April 1960.

Nevertheless, parliamentarians dislike having to face a convention or even the possibility that this might be required of them. At the State Council of February 1968, the unanimous vote of approximately thirty of them helped to defeat a branch resolution which called for a change in the re-selection procedure. In effect the proposed amendment would have turned the existing procedure on its head by stipulating that a parliamentarian would be automatically endorsed only if at least four-fifths of the branches in his electorate affirmed their support for him. The vote for the amendment was impressive (it was narrowly defeated by 144 votes to 136), largely because of the widespread appeal among activists of the arguments put forward in its favour, namely, that any member of parliament should be prepared to face a selection convention at any time, and that the suggested procedure would make re-selection a positive act by the branches concerned. Against the change it was argued, realistically enough, that some branches, although they might in fact wish for the automatic re-endorsement of their member, would be too slack in their organisation to call general meetings to resolve in his favour, as the amendment required. It followed that selection conventions might well be called 'by accident'.¹ Branch apathy therefore made the resolution impractical. Nonetheless, it touched on one of the fundamental beliefs of party activists: that branch members have the right to determine who shall be their parliamentary candidate. The usually unspectacular procedure for the re-endorsement of members of parliament conceals the

¹Verbatim notes of State Council, 28-9 February 1968.

importance which branch members attach to the principle involved.

Usually well before a parliamentarian's popularity among the branch members in his electorate declines to the point at which he risks loss of endorsement, he will have learnt through informal channels that party activists are not wholly satisfied with his attention to the local organisation or the electorate in general.¹ A formal complaint of the kind lodged by the Camperdown branch is therefore rare in style - but less so in sentiment; for it is typical that the branch's complaint stemmed not from disagreement with the representative's policies or his parliamentary actions, but from dissatisfaction with his performance of his role of local member. In 1958 the branch resolved to write to the Hon. G.S. McArthur, M.L.C., expressing 'regret' at 'his very rare attendance at any functions in the electorate', and suggesting that he should 'keep himself before the electors not only for his own good but also for the benefit of the party'. Copies of the letter were also sent to the Premier and the president of the party.²

For a sitting member to fail to be re-selected by his branches without the intervention of the Executive (as in the cases cited in the previous chapter) is extremely rare. Since 1945 there have been only five such cases. Three of these concerned Legislative Councillors; another was a member of the state lower house; and only one federal parliamentarian has been involved. When it is remembered that the party's

¹E.g., the case of P.W. Garrison, M.L.A. (Hawthorn), cited above, p. 306.

²Minutes of Camperdown branch, 26 March 1958.

central organs have never expelled or revoked the endorsement of a federal M.P., it is evident that the position of a state parliamentary member is a little less secure than his federal colleague's.

There are several possible reasons for this, such as: the greater number of state than federal parliamentarians; the overall higher calibre of federal M.P.s; the more unstable political situation at the state level until 1955; the existence of different perceptions among branch activists of the roles of state and federal members. In federally-organised parties, federal parliamentary members generally appear to enjoy greater immunity from control by the party machine than state members. This is even more apparent in the A.L.P., which believes in control of its parliamentarians, than in the Liberal Party.¹

Of the five parliamentarians who failed to retain their endorsements, most interest centres on the cases of the three Legislative Councillors - C.E. Isaac (South Eastern), Sir Clifden Eager (East Yarra), and Sir Frank Beaurepaire (Monash). Their circumstances had much in common: all three were 'inherited' by the Liberals from the U.A.P. and all lost their endorsement in 1952 to younger men who had become prominent activists in the new party's organisation. All were involved for the first time in the decentralised selection procedure adopted by the Liberal Party. The three members had, in fact, faced the electors in 1946,² but on that occasion the present selection procedure had not applied. Instead, all retiring M.L.C.s had been endorsed by the

¹See Rawson, Labor in Vain?, pp.38-9.

²Legislative Councillors are elected for six-year terms.

State Executive - after the Senate Selection Committee together with the parliamentary leader and two members of the Legislative Council had 'investigated' each province.¹ At the same time, however, applications had also been accepted from members who wished to be candidates, and at a special meeting in May the Executive endorsed a further three - Daniel Scott in East Yarra, W. Tyner in South Eastern, and A.G. Warner in Higinbotham.² In these provinces there were thus dual Liberal endorsements in 1946, a fact which seemed to presage events in the East Yarra and South Eastern provinces six years later.

In the South Eastern province, in 1952, more than one-fifth of the branches exercised their constitutional right to request that nominations for selection as the party's candidate in the forthcoming Council elections be called. At the convention, J.F. Rossiter, 39, was selected in the place of the retiring member, C.E. Isaac, 67. Rossiter at the time was a member of the Liberal Speakers Group, president of the Brighton branch, a delegate to the State Council (and soon to be elected to the Executive), chairman of the Brighton state electorate committee, and secretary of the Balaclava federal electorate committee. He had also contested the state electorates of Brunswick West (at a by-election in 1949) and Moonee Ponds in 1950.

¹SE, 19 February, 19 March 1946. Constitutional provision for the selection of Legislative Councillors by means of province committees acting as conventions does not appear to have been made until July 1946 (Constitution, as amended to 30 July 1946). Possibly the limited franchise for elections to the Legislative Council justified the party's experimenting with a centralised method of selecting candidates for the upper house.

²SE, 29 May 1946.

In the East Yarra province, Sir Clifden Eager, 67, who had held the seat for twenty-two years and was president of the Legislative Council, lost the party nomination to G.C. Hannan, 41, president of the Glen Iris branch, secretary of the Glen Iris state electorate committee and a member of the State Executive.

In the Monash province, however, Sir Frank Beaurepaire's defeat was less direct. Beaurepaire,¹ who had held the seat since 1942, was overseas when the branches in the province requested the calling of applications. He did not attempt to contest the pre-selection and so lost the party's endorsement to E.W. Wilde, 48, the president of the Elsternwick branch, chairman of the Elsternwick state electorate committee and vice-chairman of the Balaclava federal electorate committee.²

In many ways the defeat in the 1946 Legislative Council elections of J.S. Disney, the re-endorsed Liberal member for Higinbotham province, provides a case comparable with the previous three. Disney was opposed by A.G. Warner, one of the three candidates who applied for and were granted special endorsement by the Executive. The candidacy of Warner, a prominent Melbourne businessman and member of the first Council of the I.P.A., was reported to have the strong backing of branches in

¹ Lord Mayor of Melbourne, 1940-42; founder and chairman of Olympic Tyre and Rubber Coy Ltd.; chairman of committee to organise 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne.

² None of the endorsed Liberal candidates was elected. In Monash province Wilde lost to a Labor candidate; in the South Eastern province, Isaac contested as an Independent Liberal against Rossiter allowing Labor to win the seat; in East Yarra, Eager, nominating as an Independent, easily defeated Hannan.

Higinbotham.¹ Although no selection conventions were held in 1946, it seems likely, therefore, that had Disney been forced to contest a convention against Warner he would have lost the selection - as did his colleagues in 1952. This conjecture is strengthened by the fact that Disney had accepted portfolios in Ian Macfarlan's short-lived 'rebel' Liberal ministry of October-November 1945. Many branch activists would have sought to punish him for this disloyalty.

Belonging to the old guard of former U.A.P. members, Disney in 1946, Isaac, Beaurepaire and Eager in 1952, were ousted by politically-ambitious activists who had gained prominence in the party's extra-parliamentary organisation. Required to face the electors only every six years, perhaps too-accustomed to the security of the 'old' Legislative Council with its restricted franchise and, in some cases, perhaps also overestimating the political value of social eminence, the incumbents had failed to develop loyalties within the constituency organisations that grew around them. This left them vulnerable in the face of the party's recruitment and selection procedures - as these have been described in the previous chapter.

In Eager's case, however, there were other reasons why the local organisation in East Yarra turned against him. Branch activists expect their representatives to be good party members. They are regarded as belonging to a team and are expected to act conjointly with their

¹Argus, 1 June 1946. Later, the Labor parliamentary leader, J. Cain, accused Warner of spending 'between £5,000 and £10,000' to win his seat. Warner denied this: 'I'm sure my friends didn't spent (sic) that much. But I'm prepared to admit the campaign was well organised' (ibid., 11 May 1949).

colleagues in parliament. Eager was not a good party man: he placed principles ahead of party and there are times, as in 1951, when it is especially impolitic to do this. In 1951 the Country Party minority government, relying on Labor support in the Legislative Assembly, introduced into parliament the Greater Melbourne Council Bill. This provided for a single council of seventy-two members to take over the functions of the thirty municipal councils in the Greater Melbourne area.¹

The Bill caused a furore in the Liberal Party. At its meeting in May, the State Council passed a motion, submitted by the Executive, declaring the party's opposition to 'the Labor inspired proposal' and requesting the parliamentary party to fight the Bill at all stages.² The Bill, it was argued, would 'establish another Parliament in the State', since it would embrace 60 per cent of Victoria's population; it was 'socialistic' in centralising power in one body and, moreover, it would enable the resources of the City of Melbourne to 'be plundered to benefit certain Labor municipalities'.³

Lacking the numbers in the Assembly to block the Bill, the party was dependent on its slight majority of one against the C.P. - Labor combination in the Legislative Council.⁴ In this balanced parliamentary

¹Ibid., 4 October 1951.

²SC, 8 May 1951.

³Ibid.

⁴Party strengths were Liberal 18, Country Party 8, Labor 8. The president of the Council was Sir Clifden Eager (Liberal), thus reducing Liberal's effective majority to one.

situation, Sir Clifden Eager's position as president of the Council assumed great political importance for the party. In September, after discussing a letter from a branch concerning the Greater Melbourne Bill, the Executive carried the following motion:

That this Executive endorses the principle that no member of the Parliamentary Party (in both State and Federal spheres) should hold any office in Parliament which precludes the Member from voting in Parliament at any stage unless the party is in Government.

The Executive calls on the State Parliamentary Party to adopt and implement this principle forthwith and recommends to the Federal Council that this principle be adopted by the Federal Parliamentary Party.

Meanwhile, the East Yarra electorate committee went a step further and threatened Eager with the loss of his endorsement if he did not vacate the chair in order to vote from the floor of the Council against the Greater Melbourne Bill.² Eager refused -- on the now old-fashioned ground that party politics should not dominate the Legislative Council. Furthermore, he believed that the office of president should be above party.³ These were traditional non-Labor sentiments with which the Liberal Party still would have liked to identify itself if only for their rhetorical value; which, in fact, Hollway had tried to invoke as

¹SE, 28 September 1951.

²Minutes of Kew branch, 18 October 1951; Argus, 15 March 1952; Minutes of East Kew branch, 29 August 1952.

³Argus, 24 May, 23 June 1952. Cf. Sir George Knox's refusal in 1947 to stand down as Speaker of the House of Assembly to vote with the Liberal Party against the Labor minority government, and the subsequent demand by a branch in Knox's electorate of Scoresby for the withdrawal of his endorsement. There was little support within the electorate for such a move. A special meeting of the Scoresby electorate committee unanimously affirmed Knox's endorsement (*ibid.*, 25, 27 September, 10, 14 October 1947).

late as 1947.¹ But in 1951 the occasion was inopportune and the party-oriented attitudes and actions of Liberals killed this non-Labor fiction once and for all.

Eager thus defied the party on what seemed to the Liberals a major political issue and as a result lost his endorsement in 1952 with, it may be assumed, the full concurrence of the Executive.² As the chairman of the selection convention remarked: 'naturally anybody not prepared to oppose...such iniquitous legislation would lose many friends in the Party'.³ Similar expressions of the overriding importance of party solidarity were voiced by A.G. Warner, M.L.C., when campaigning in 1958 in support of R.J. Hamer, the Liberal candidate then opposing Eager. Sir Clifden, Warner argued (with dubious accuracy), had owed his seat to the Liberal Party organisation, and so it was 'his duty to be loyal'.⁴ On the same theme, the Kew South East branch recorded in its minutes that:

The pros and cons regarding Sir Clifden Eager and Mr Hamer as 'liberal' candidates for East Yarra were discussed and it was unanimously decided that as a 'member of the Team' and, as such, if for no other reason, the Branch would support Mr Hamer.⁵

¹...the Liberal Party did not endeavour to break down the Council's tradition of impartiality.

The Liberal members were alone in this respect, as both the Country and Labor Parties now imposed strict discipline on Council members' (ibid., 8 July 1947).

²He won re-election as an Independent in 1952, but was defeated by the endorsed Liberal candidate, R.J. Hamer, in 1958.

³Ibid., 25 April 1952.

⁴Age, 6 June 1958.

⁵Minutes of Kew South East branch, 16 June 1958.

The remaining two cases of sitting members failing to win re-selection are more recent. They involve, in varying degrees, the effects of electoral redistributions; but in both, personality factors were also implicated. There is clear evidence that in 1963 local support for G.S. Gibbs, M.L.A. (Portland), was waning. The Portland branch refused to re-endorse him,¹ and a municipal councillor threatened to oppose him in the 1964 election as an Independent Liberal.² Gibbs, unrepentant, announced that he would contest the seat as an Independent were he to lose the party's endorsement.³ In the event, he retained both his endorsement and his seat in the 1964 election. But his position became even less secure as a result of the redistribution of state electoral boundaries in 1965. Although Gibbs was declared by the Executive to be the sitting member for the new seat of Warrnambool,⁴ more than one-fifth of the branches demanded that nominations be called. At the resulting convention I.W. Smith defeated Gibbs, who subsequently contested the 1967 election as an unendorsed Liberal, thereby expelling himself from the party - as well as losing his seat.

In the second case, M.W. Lee, the federal member for Lalor, did nothing to antagonise his local organisation. Rather, initially at

¹Age, 24 July 1963.

²Ibid., 22 August 1963.

³Ibid., 24 July 1963.

⁴In accordance with Constitution, 1965, Clause 63 (ii) which states:

Where a redistribution occurs and a member of the Parliamentary Party represents an existing Electorate which is wholly or partly within a new or altered Electorate the State Executive may declare the Member to be the sitting Member for such new or altered Electorate...

least, he was the innocent victim of electoral redistribution. Lee's election to parliament in 1966 was a surprise, for the seat of Lalor was generally regarded as a Labor stronghold. The federal boundary changes announced in 1968 made it even less attractive from the Liberal point of view. For the purpose of endorsing candidates for the next general elections, the Executive took the effects of the boundary changes into account and quite properly used its constitutional powers to declare Lee to be the sitting member for the adjacent new electorate of Diamond Valley, since it included suburbs that had formerly been located in Lalor. But Diamond Valley promised to be a safe Liberal seat.¹ As such it was a gift from the boundary commissioners that was too valuable to be doled out by the Executive. Others besides Lee coveted it, among them several prominent activists in the Diamond Valley branches. Consequently the branches in the new electorate exercised their right to request that nominations be called. At the ensuing convention, although Lee undoubtedly received more support than had he not been an M.P., he was defeated on the tenth ballot by N.A. Brown. Lee, a relatively obscure backbencher, simply lacked the personal appeal and the standing necessary to survive the strong competition for pre-selection that may be expected in any likely blue-ribbon seat.²

¹E.g., see Australian Financial Review, 18 September 1968; Australian, 22 August 1968. In the general elections in October 1969, Diamond Valley duly returned a Liberal member.

²Lee's relative lack of appeal was further born out by his later pre-selection problems. Having failed to win Diamond Valley he was subsequently selected and endorsed as the party's candidate for the next general election in the Labor-held seat of Bendigo. But when the popular Labor member for Bendigo unexpectedly announced his retirement, thus
(cont.)

PARLIAMENTARIANS AND THE ELECTORATE ORGANISATIONS¹

Once elected, a parliamentarian cannot ignore the party organisation in his constituency, for it not only performs certain useful electoral tasks on his behalf, but, as we have seen, through the re-selection procedure it retains a formal power over him. It should not be imagined, however, that branches make heavy demands on their parliamentary members.

necessitating a by-election, activists in the electorate began to perceive it as a possible Liberal seat. Interest in candidacy for Bendigo rose, and the branches requested the holding of a pre-selection ballot (Australian, 2 April 1969; Age, 11 April 1969). Lee duly lodged his nomination (Canberra Times, 16 April 1969), but it was quickly rumoured that his chance of winning selection was 'very slight'. W. Cambridge, a former mayor of Bendigo was seen as the front runner (Australian, 17 April 1969). With memories of Diamond Valley still fresh, Lee had little enough reason for being confident of winning selection. In addition, his position was complicated by the fact that he was still the member for Lalor. Thus, were he to be chosen as the candidate for Bendigo and subsequently win the by-election, the party would face a second by-election in Lalor - and probably lose the seat on the eve of a general election. Eventually Lee withdrew his nomination, with the Executive's promise that, if the Liberal Party failed to win the by-election, his original endorsement for the general election remained valid (Age, 22 April 1969). Cambridge, as some had predicted, won the endorsement, but lost the by-election - and four months later, in the general election, Lee was no more successful.

¹Most of the information in this section is based on notes made during interviews with parliamentarians during which, among other things, the members' relationship with their electorate organisations was discussed. It was not a random sample: seventeen of the nineteen members were state parliamentarians; nor was it a structured interview intended to probe in depth the role perceptions of the members. The object of this section is to illustrate the typical attitudes and styles of parliamentarians in relation to their local party organisation; its method is impressionistic.

Good relations with some of the leading activists in the local organisation, attendance at some branch meetings (especially the annual meetings), a friendly enquiry over the phone as to a branch's activities or, in the country, a personal call on the secretary and president as the member moves around his electorate, and care in acknowledging the help of branches during elections are the main and usually adequate forms of activity needed to ensure the loyalty of the branches to their parliamentarians.

Within this framework of conventional activities, parliamentarians develop their own styles of interaction with their branches. Influenced by such factors as their temperament, their length of incumbency, their pre-selection experience, the attitude of leading activists (and potential candidates) in their electorate and the political character of the electorate parliamentarians tend to develop either a limited or an ample view of their role in relation to the local organisation. New parliamentary members, for example, tend to maximise their activities with the organisation: they are more conscious than their senior colleagues of the power of the branches in the selection process, and with their own experience in the organisation still fresh in mind they are still in many ways more oriented towards their former role of activist than their new ones of legislator and parliamentary representative.

It is a characteristic of 'the maximiser' that he regards the branches as having purposes other than their classic 'handmaid' role at election time. Thus, one parliamentarian in this category claimed always

to explain contentious legislation to his branches so that they were able to disperse the information; he claimed also to encourage the branches to send policy resolutions to the State Council and that he had 'often' introduced branch ideas into the party room. Another, with the help of several keen activists, hoped to develop his state electorate committee into a more permanently functioning body, which would discuss local problems and 'feed policy ideas back through the branches to the Council': 'We want constructive local suggestions to come from Liberals'. The member in the latter example had been a parliamentarian for less than six months and, it appeared, was still more at home in the local organisation than in parliament. Moreover, his electorate, a new one in 1967, was not regarded as a safe Liberal seat; organisational activity, it was felt, was necessary to help him to retain it.

The 'maximiser' tries to integrate the roles of the organisational and parliamentary wings, while the 'minimiser' tends to separate them. The best example encountered of the latter was a state minister occupying a blue-ribbon seat to which he was first elected at a by-election in 1956. He stated that he did not attend many branch meetings or encourage policy resolutions. The 'prime function' of branches in his view was 'to get candidates in'. He admitted that after the redistribution of state electorates in 1965 there had been 'a fair chance' that he would have to face a convention, but added that he 'cultivated the whole electorate' and that it would take 'a very good candidate' to remove him from office even if he were forced to stand as an Independent. A second example, also

a state minister, declared that he 'turned up to meetings fairly regularly', but did not attempt to stimulate branch activity. In his view the parliamentarian should not feel he is under an obligation to attend branch meetings; the branch members 'should feel they are doing their bit by helping him get elected and permit him to get on with his job'.

Members of parliament commonly express their relationship with their branches as a reciprocal obligation: branches are expected to work for the candidate at election time, the parliamentarian therefore 'owes it' to the rank-and-file to take an interest in their activities. Again, the 'maximisers' tend to be frankest in admitting an obligation:

- You expect them to work... [You are] obliged to go to their meetings and report back to them.
- I go to every meeting I'm invited to, if possible. This is part of my job. After all, branches work for you at election time.
- [You have] an ethical obligation to support the branches in order to repay this activity and loyalty.
- You cannot expect branches to help unless they are activated.

And in much the same vein, though with an element of noblesse oblige, one member conceded that he could not do without the branches at election time, but thought they would collapse if not 'looked after', while another stated that he attended branch meetings when he could in order to 'add interest to the meetings and stimulate a higher attendance'.

Electoral activities are thus uppermost in the minds of all parliamentarians when they discuss the functions of the branches. Relatively few members encourage the policy-making activities of branches

in the manner of the 'maximisers', though some appear to adopt a supervisory role in this field. Thus one declared that he attended branch meetings partly in order to 'keep a check on their resolutions', to encourage those based on research, suggest practical difficulties in the way of others, and to 'kill off the plain silly ones'. Again, some parliamentarians acknowledge the branches' role as two-way channels of information between themselves and the electorate; but generally this function is given little or no emphasis: M.P.s have alternative means of keeping in touch with public opinion.

Frankly admitted by some parliamentarians, suppressed by others, the power of branches to force a sitting member to face a selection convention is a real factor in the party's structure. Acknowledgment of this power ranged from a minister's cheerful announcement that 'the branches are the masters' to the begrudging observation that it was 'not a great consideration'. But no member of parliament, least of all, it has been suggested, a state politician, would say that the powers of the branches were of no account. Pressure for parliamentary members to face conventions is often linked in their minds with the aspirations of individual branch activists:

- It is necessary to keep close to the branches. To do otherwise is foolish. There are plenty of ambitious people seeking a safe seat.
- Others want blue-ribbon seats and will use the opportunity of a neglectful or indifferent member to seek a convention.

It is evident that some parliamentarians feel a conflict between acknowledging the formal powers of the branches and their sense of

autonomy as members of parliament. Like the member cited earlier, who stated that he 'cultivated the whole electorate', they relate themselves to voters rather than party members. But the re-selection power of the branches constrains this tendency and is conducive to a closer relationship between the wings of the party than might otherwise be the case. Before a member faces the electors he is accountable for his actions, both as the local parliamentary representative and a party member, to the activists of the constituency organisation. He cannot drift too far from them. If the branches rarely use their formal powers it is partly owing to the natural cohesion of the party, partly because parliamentarians do in fact recognise and act on their 'ethical' obligations to the rank-and-file who support them, and partly because the majority of members of parliament have a solid background in the branches and so a general feeling for their place and importance in party affairs.

CHAPTER 12

PARTY CONFLICT AND ELECTIONS

A major determinant of a party's organising activity is its electoral and parliamentary relationship with other parties. In Australia this factor is complicated by federalism and we have already referred to the effect on the Victorian Liberal Party's organisation of the differences in its relations with the Country Party in state and federal politics.

The Liberal Party's traditional role as the main anti-Labor party still dominates the public rhetoric of electoral and parliamentary conflict. Furthermore, many suburban branch activists perceive their support for the party primarily as helping to keep Labor out. The notion of political conflict with a 'socialist' adversary provides an essential emotional rationale for participation in party activities. But election results in Victoria in recent years suggest a rather different picture of Liberal-Labor rivalry, one which illustrates the ritualistic as well as the realistic nature of the conflict. As Table 12.1 shows, the Liberal Party has been the dominant party in both state and federal elections, especially since the Labor split in 1955. For more than a decade there has been a high degree of electoral stability in Victoria. Only four of thirty-three federal electorates changed their party 'stripe' in the five general elections and six by-elections held between 1955 and 1968.¹

¹Wimmera and Indi, Liberal to C.P., 1958; Lalor, Labor to Liberal, 1966; Corio, Liberal to Labor, 1967 (by-election). In 1969 Lalor, its boundaries slightly modified by the 1968 redistribution, but also conforming to a state-wide swing, returned to Labor, which also won Maribyrnong from the Liberals.

TABLE 12.1

NUMBER OF SEATS WON BY ALL PARTIES IN VICTORIAN
FEDERAL AND STATE ELECTIONS 1945-67^a

House of Representatives

	1946	1949	1951	1954	1955	1958	1961	1963	1966
Labor	8	13	15	15	10	10	10	10	8
Liberal	7(35)	17(51)	15(45)	15(45)	20(61)	18(54)	18(54)	18(54)	19(57)
C.P.	4	3	3	3	3	5	5	5	5
D.L.P.	-	-	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
Others	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	20	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33

Legislative Assembly

	1945	1947	1950	1952	1955	1958	1961	1964	1967
Labor	31	17	24	37	20	18	17	18	16
Liberal	10(15)	27(41)	27(41)	11(17)	33(50)	39(59)	39(59)	38(57)	44(60)
C.P.	18	20	13	12	11	9	9	10	12
D.L.P.	-	-	-	-	1	0	0	0	0
Others	6	1	1	5	1	0	1	0	1
Total	65	65	65	65	66	66	66	66	73

^aLiberal percentage of seats is given in brackets.

Source: Hughes and Graham, A Handbook of Australian Government and Politics. Results of the elections in 1966 and 1967 have been calculated from the official returns.

Similarly, at the state level, in the three general elections fought between 1958 and 1964 (after which the electorates were redistributed), there were only four changes among the sixty-four seats in the Legislative Assembly. By-elections in 1960 and 1962 accounted for two more.¹ The efficiency with which the D.L.P. has been able to direct its supporters' preferences to the Liberal Party for more than a decade has helped to reduce the incidence of 'swinging' seats in Victorian elections.² Under relatively stable and favourable electoral conditions since 1955, the Liberal Party has been able to take its organisation almost for granted in suburban areas, where the Liberal-Labor conflict is dominant. Only after the 1961 federal elections, when the Liberal Party's share of the first preference vote declined from 38 per cent to 35 per cent, was the general secretary disposed to remark that the party 'would do well to consider what might be termed the "good old days" as gone'.³

LIBERAL PARTY V. COUNTRY PARTY

A distinctive feature of Victorian state politics since the

¹Ballaarat North, C.P. to Liberal, 1960 (by-election); Benalla, Liberal to C.P., 1961; Oakleigh, Labor to Liberal, 1961; Broadmeadows, Liberal to Labor, 1962 (by-election); Kara Kara, Liberal to C.P., 1964; Bendigo, Labor to Liberal, 1964. The case of Moorabbin has not been counted since it involved no change of representative. In 1961 the sitting member (Suggett) was re-elected as an Independent Liberal; in 1964 he won the seat again as the endorsed Liberal candidate.

²Paul Duffy, 'The Democratic Labor Party', in Australian Politics: A Reader, ed. Mayer, 1966, p.342.

³SE, 9 February 1962.

1930s has been the electoral and parliamentary strength of the Country Party.¹ But insofar as the position of the C.P. was due largely to the operation of an electoral system heavily biased in favour of country areas, it was vulnerable. Consequently, reform of electoral boundaries in 1945 and 1953 has contributed to the C.P.'s relative parliamentary decline. Even more peculiar than its electoral strength has been the opportunistic character of the C.P.'s strategies, and the bewildering roles it has played in the state party system. Since the formation of the Liberal Party, for example, the C.P. has the unique record of having governed as a minority party (supported at different times by the Labor and Liberal parties), governed in coalition with the Liberals and maintained a minority Liberal government in office. After 1952, however, first Labor (1952-5) and then Liberal governments held office with absolute majorities in the Legislative Assembly - albeit a slender one in the case of the Liberal Party in 1955. The C.P., in its third-party opposition role, has concentrated on maintaining its grass-roots organisation, preserving its reduced electoral strength and, in parliament, on harassing the Liberal government from the vantage point of the Legislative Council where the Liberals have never been able to secure a stable majority. With the backing of Labor, the C.P. on a number of occasions has forced the government to modify aspects of its legislative programme

¹Some of the characteristics of the Victorian party system are discussed in D.W. Rawson, 'Victoria, 1910-1966: Out of Step, or Merely Shuffling?', Historical Studies, Vol. 13, No.49, October 1967, pp.60-75; Joan Rydon, 'Victoria, 1910-1966: Political Peculiarities', Historical Studies, Vol.13, No.50, April 1968, pp.233-8; 'Politics at State Level -- Victoria', Current Affairs Bulletin, Vol.39, No.7, February 1967.

and has extracted humiliating concessions from the Liberals -- as in 1965 when, among other things, it forced the state party to drop the word 'Country' from the title by which it had been known since 1949. At state level, therefore, relations between the C.P. and the Liberal Party are at best strained and more usually take the form of open hostility.

The presence of a hostile and electorally formidable C.P. has heightened the Liberal Party's awareness of its own role as a country (as well as a city) party. It has given a practical relevance, and a greater note of determination, to the party's rhetorical claim to represent all sections of the community. Its organisational activity thus has a more pronounced rural orientation than if the Liberal and Country parties lived in harmony -- though, as we shall see, it is still less pronounced than many Liberal activists would like.

The Liberal Party has attempted to expand its role as a party representing country districts in several ways. For nearly a decade after it was formed it hoped to assume the role entirely, by negotiating a merger with the C.P.; but Liberal's overtures were always brushed aside by the C.P. and were finally abandoned.¹ The nearest the Liberal Party came to achieving success in this direction was in 1949 when six parliamentarians left the C.P. and joined the Liberal Party, bringing with them a batch of supporters from their local organisations. As a result,

¹An account of these attempts may be found in West, Power in the Liberal Party, Chapter 1, passim.

with much public fanfare a 'new' Liberal and Country Party was launched at a public meeting in Horsham on 11 February, and the Liberal Party's original constitution was modified to provide for equal representation of country and city members on its central elective organs (the State Executive and the joint policy committee) and at vice-presidential level.¹

Conflict with the C.P. and attempts to usurp its political role have meant for the Liberals on the one hand an aggressive confrontation with the C.P. and on the other a striving, through both organisational activity and governmental policy, to entice rural voters from it by persuading them of the Liberal Party's genuine concern for the problem of the countryman.

Since 1950, participation by the Liberal Party in a composite state government (which could only feasibly be in collaboration with the C.P.) has been specifically debarred.² At grass-roots level feelings towards the C.P. often run high, especially in the northern and north-western electorates where it is strongly organised and has not only held the Liberals in check, but in recent years has inflicted electoral defeats on them both in federal and state elections.³ The mood of Liberal Party activists in these areas was summed up by a branch delegate to the State Council who exclaimed with exasperation: 'I'll second anything, Mr. Chairman, that will eliminate the Country Party'.⁴

¹SC, 22 February 1949.

²Ibid., 31 March - 1 April 1950.

³E.g., Indi, Wimmera (federal), 1958; Benalla (state), 1961; Kara Kara (state), 1964; Lowan (state), 1967.

⁴Verbatim notes, State Council, 31 July - 1 August 1968. Also, Herald, 1 August 1968.

In 1947 the State Executive set up a standing sub-committee to provide a direct organisational link between the party's central institutions and the rural section of the community. The objects of the committee were given as the promotion of policies beneficial to country electors and the creation of a channel of communication for 'the country point of view'.¹ To this end the Committee maintains personal and also more formal links with organised country groups; in 1960, for example, it contacted twenty-four rural organisations with the request that it be included on their mailing list for conference agendas and other relevant publications -- 'in the hope that current problems arising in the various sectors of the primary industries will thus be brought promptly to the Party's notice'.² As well as concerning themselves with matters of rural policy, the members of the Committee keep a critical eye on the effectiveness of the party's organisation in country electorates. Several times they have pressed for an even stronger orientation of the party's organisation to rural electors. In 1958 the Committee recommended setting up a council to deal specifically with matters of rural policy. This was to meet twice yearly and comprise members of the existing Rural Committee, state ministers responsible for rural matters, five other members of the state parliamentary party, several federal parliamentary members representing Victorian country electorates, and persons co-opted from areas of the state or from primary industries not already represented on the council.³ The Executive approved the plan 'in principle' but it was never

¹SE, 25 February 1947.

²Ibid., 17 June 1960.

³Ibid., 15 August 1958.

implemented.

In 1959, after the Liberal Party had lost the federal seats of Indi and Wimmera to the C.P. in the 1958 general elections, the Rural Committee tabled a report to the Executive which included suggestions for a greater degree of decentralisation of the party's country organisation. It proposed that the functions of the electorate committees be widened to include responsibility for collecting finance, handling newspaper publicity, and reporting local political trends to the Executive. Recognising that time and distance prevented party officers from visiting country areas regularly, the report suggested that, as a consequence of this, the Executive's view of the problems of rural electorates was often 'a distorted one'.¹

The Rural Committee has tended to adopt a hard-line, anti-C.P. approach to country organisation. In the report to the Executive in 1959, referred to above, the Committee emphasised that electoral pressure on the C.P. must not be slackened, and went as far as to recommend separate, not joint, Senate teams. On this occasion also the Rural Committee was provoked into criticising its federal counterpart. Chafing at the apparent influence of the Country Party in the rural policies of the federal coalition, the state Committee called for a 'more virile' federal rural body which would be prepared, if necessary, to adopt attitudes towards rural problems different from those expressed by the federal government. The government was 'basically C.P. in its approach to these

¹Ibid., 4 December 1959.

matters', claimed the Committee, 'because of the distribution of portfolios'.¹

In 1964, at the request of the State Executive, the general secretary prepared 'a long-range programme' of organisational activity aimed at maintaining and increasing the party's share of the country seats. McConnell's report, which was less radical in tone than any the Rural Committee might have been expected to produce, emphasised as a first step the need to create a climate of opinion in rural electorates which was favourable to the Liberal Party, and which made a separate C.P. seem redundant. More specifically, it argued that the development of a 'true rural image' entailed maintaining effective liaison with farmers' organisations, briefing federal and state parliamentarians on rural problems and the Liberal Party's approach to these, producing publicity literature for the farmers' organisations and rural electors, and channelling information through the country newspapers. The report then recommended the appointment of a full-time officer to be in charge of rural organisational affairs. It noted finally that, although the party should proceed with the formation of branches, this activity was unlikely to be successful in C.P.-held seats until country electors were convinced that the Liberal Party 'spoke with authority' on rural matters.² Once again the key recommendation -- the appointment of a rural officer -- was not acted on, presumably because of lack of finance.

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 20 November 1964.

A more recent organisational device for attracting the favourable attention of the country voter is that of periodically holding large and well-publicised rural conferences at which resolutions dealing with primary industry are debated. In 1965 a conference in the Western District town of Colac, organised by the Corangamite electorate committee, was reputedly attended by approximately 200 delegates from country branches throughout the state; it was opened by the Premier and attended by the chairman of the Federal Rural Committee, the state president, and state and federal parliamentarians.¹

In federal politics, a different relationship with the C.P. has existed. To facilitate the maintenance of the coalition, the Victorian Division has refrained from contesting the federal seats of Mallee, Murray and Gippsland; secondly, joint Senate tickets are arranged which allot the Liberals first, third and fourth places, and the C.P. candidates second and fifth. The need to defer to the Country element in the federal coalition clashes with the Liberal Party's 'blood-lust' towards the C.P. at state level. Thus the state organisation is under constant pressure from some of its country members to lean more heavily on the federal C.P. Many, for example, feel that the party should nominate a candidate in every federal electorate, as is sometimes done in all state seats. A resolution to this effect was debated at length and with more than usual heat at the State Council of July-August 1967. Supporters of the motion emphasised the need to develop the habit of Liberal voting in

¹Age, 6 March 1965.

areas now ceded to the C.P., in order to avoid losing state seats in these localities. Opponents of the resolution argued in terms of the importance of maintaining harmony within the coalition government. They were supported by the chairman of the Council, the state president, who suggested that implementing the motion would mean, in effect, the Prime Minister opposing his deputy, J. McEwen, whose seat of Murray was one of those granted electoral immunity by the Liberal Party. Even with the chairman's intervention ('I hope I have not said too much') the motion was only narrowly defeated by 130 votes to 110.¹ Perhaps partly as a result of this the party a year later announced its decision to contest the seat of Mallee for the first time at the general elections in 1969.²

Many country members feel that the Liberal Party could and should do more in other ways to match the organisational activities of the C.P. This was the essence of a demand from a country branch for a review of the Liberal Party's organisation, 'with the object of building up a better Liberal image in the minds of country people'.³ As well as creating and maintaining a branch structure in the northern and north-western regions of the state, country activists insist that there is a need for better Liberal publicity in rural areas to counter the alleged C.P. bias of many regional newspapers and the C.P.'s own journal, the Countryman. They urge

¹Verbatim notes, State Council, 26-7 July 1967.

²Australian, 24 September 1968.

³Agenda, State Council, 26-7 July 1967. The increased concern with party organisation in country electorates was provoked by the loss of the state seat of Lowan in April 1967.

the publication by the Liberal Party of a similar newspaper or, at the very least, the regular circulation to branches of a newsletter setting out the Liberal viewpoint and the government's record on farmers' issues.¹

A more radical proposal was debated at the State Council of July-August 1968. This required the party to place the C.P. last (after the Labor Party) on its how-to-vote cards,² a move which the branch concerned described as 'a step towards political stability in the State political arena, and a move towards the restoration of the two-party system of Government'.³ As well as attempting to have their own party's organisational resources used more effectively in an effort to undercut the C.P.'s electoral base, many Liberals support the idea of reform of the Legislative Council in order to reduce its parliamentary strength.⁴ The C.P.'s tactical use of its position in the Legislative Council is widely regarded by Liberals as unscrupulous and as interference by a blatantly sectional group in the mandated party's rightful power to govern. Indeed, such is their indignation that many more would undoubtedly favour abolishing the upper house - were this not an avowed Labor policy.

Conflict with the C.P. is thus reflected in a variety of organisational activities which are additional to those stemming from the party's

¹Verbatim notes, State Council, 26-7 July 1967.

²Preferential voting requires voters to number all candidates contesting the seat in order of preference. Parties thus print and distribute how-to-vote cards setting out their preferred order for numbering the candidates.

³Agenda, State Council, 31 July - 1 August 1968. The Council resolved that the resolution 'be not put'.

⁴E.g., resolutions on the agenda of the State Council, 31 July - 1 August 1968. See also Age, 21 May 1965.

basic anti-Labor role. Occasional electoral reverses in rural seats, the vigilance of the Rural Committee and growls from country activists ensure that the question of country organisation is kept to the forefront of the party's priorities.

ELECTION CAMPAIGNS: PREPARATION AND PLANNING

One effect of a federal bicameral constitution is to increase the amount of electoral activity which the branches are called on to perform. In only eight of the twenty-four years from the formation of the party up to 1968 have party activists enjoyed an electioneering 'holiday' (Table 12.2). This ensures that, even if many members do little more than assist during election campaigns, the party has a more consistent level of activity than under similar circumstances in most political systems.

The extra-parliamentary organisation must be ready for an election whenever one is called. Premiers and prime ministers are not greatly swayed by the views of non-parliamentary leaders as to when an election should be held. Certainly the attempts of the Victorian State Executive to dissuade the Prime Minister from calling a snap general election in 1963 were of no avail. Thus in September the Executive resolved:

That in view of the vulnerability of certain Liberal held seats in Victoria and the general appreciation by members of this Executive of the electoral prospect in Victoria at this time, this Executive, unless some major issue arises, urges the Prime Minister to avoid the holding of a snap election in 1963.¹

¹ SE, 13 September 1963.

TABLE 12.2
GENERAL ELECTIONS IN VICTORIA 1945-68

	House of Reps.	Senate	Legislative Assembly	Legislative Council
1945			X	
1946	X	X		X
1947			X	
1948				
1949	X	X		X
1950			X	
1951	X	X		
1952			X	X
1953		X		
1954	X			
1955	X	X	X	X
1956				
1957				
1958	X	X	X	X
1959				
1960				
1961	X	X	X	X
1962				
1963	X			
1964		X	X	X
1965				
1966	X			
1967		X	X	X
1968				

At its next meeting the Executive reinforced this view by requesting that the state president make 'a personal approach to the Prime Minister and/or the Federal Treasurer to reaffirm the State Executive's request not to hold a Federal election this year'.¹ Nonetheless it went ahead with preparations for a possible general election,² and this precaution was not wasted: Menzies called the elections for 30 November.

No sooner is one general election over than preparations begin for the next. The Executive has the task of initiating centrally-planned organisational activity where it is most needed. For this purpose the general secretary compiles a comprehensive political appreciation after each election. In this, he reviews the preceding campaign, analyses the voting results according to different categories of electorates and, on the basis of any detectable trends, suggests what organisational action should be taken. Electorates are classified into broad categories such as 'safe', 'need watching', 'may be lost', 'might be won' and 'little or no chance of winning'.³ This is used as a guide to formulating such organisational priorities as where branches need to be organised or strengthened, where early endorsement of candidates would be an advantage, and in which electorates an intense campaign will be necessary at the next election.

On the basis of electoral trends and inter-party relations, the Executive sets short-term objectives to which specific organisational

¹Ibid., 11 October 1963.

²Ibid.

³E.g., 'An Appreciation and a Plan for the 1961 Elections' (ibid., 11 September 1959).

activities will be linked. Two examples will serve to illustrate this process. In the federal elections in November 1958 the Liberal Party lost two rural seats - Indi and Wimmera - to the Country Party. Representation in both state and federal metropolitan electorates, however, remained strong. Accordingly, the general secretary's appreciation, tabled in 1959, concentrated on the need for activity intended to build up the party's federal vote in rural areas. It concluded, for example, that the party's rural policy needed 'urgent attention', and to this end advocated conferences at which the Rural Committee of the Executive, the state Minister for Lands and federal and state parliamentarians representing country electorates would participate. In addition, it recommended a more continuous campaign in rural electorates involving, as well as the local candidates, tours by party leaders and Senators, rallies and the publication of regular newspaper articles.¹ The short-term objective was to check the electoral progress of the Country Party and specifically to win back Indi and Wimmera. In the long term, however, it was reasoned that the party must expect a revival of the A.L.P. and the loss of some metropolitan seats: future Liberal gains would therefore 'come mainly from the C.P. and not Labor'.² It was the Executive's task to devise and direct organisational activity to this end.

Three years later the focus of attention shifted back to the suburbs. In 1961, the Liberal Party's vote in both the state and

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

federal elections declined as electors felt the pinch of an economic recession and registered their disapproval of the federal government's policies. The general secretary's appreciation was sober in tone: 'The A.L.P. has again become a formidable opponent capable of conducting a top line election campaign. We must face the problem of reversing the trend which is shown by the figures'.¹ Noting that the party's share of the vote in the expanding outer suburbs had not increased as rapidly as that of the D.L.P. or the A.L.P., the report concluded that home finance, education facilities and local government problems were the three main concerns of electors in these areas. Federal and state governments, it was agreed, should attend urgently to the question of second mortgages. In addition, a plan for more systematic use of interstate survey research in new suburbs was forwarded to the Federal Executive,² but lack of finance prevented the plan from being implemented.³

Organisation alone does not determine the outcome of elections -- Indi and Wimmera were still held by the Country Party a decade after the Liberals lost them, despite a strengthening of the Liberal Party's organisation in these electorates. But the appraisal of past election results and preparation for the future give direction and purpose to the central planning of organisational activity. Given the party's long period in office, however, and the degree of electoral stability it has

¹SE, 9 February 1962.

²Ibid., 16 March 1962.

³Ibid., 8 June 1962.

enjoyed since 1955, the Executive has not had to do much re-thinking of electoral strategies nor to initiate drastic organisational measures on the scale of the crash programme of branch development attempted (with little success) by the N.S.W. Division in 1959-60.¹

Planning the election campaigns at both the state and federal levels is a task for the party leaders and senior staff. The State and Federal Executives discuss the proposals for the respective campaigns, but they have little to do with their formulation. The key persons in the planning of a federal campaign are thus the parliamentary leader and members of the Staff Planning and Policy Committees.² Since the state organisation is responsible for implementing the federal plan, it is usual for the general secretary to report to the State Executive such details of the plan as: the main theme of the campaign, the timetable of broadcasts and meet-the-people tours by leading parliamentarians, and the action planned for marginal seats. This at least keeps the members of the Executive informed and gives them an opportunity to discuss the plan and make suggestions, though by this stage the major details of the campaign are fixed.

¹See Charles John Orlebeke, *The Liberal Party of Australia in New South Wales: A Study of the Political Party as an Office-Seeking Organisation*, Ph.D. thesis, Michigan State University, 1965, pp.144-71.

²The personnel of these bodies overlaps: the Staff Planning Committee comprises the six state general secretaries, the federal secretary, federal research director, and federal director of public relations. The Policy Committee comprises the Staff Committee, a federal parliamentarian from each state, the federal president and vice-presidents, two ministers nominated by the parliamentary leader and the leader himself.

The procedure for state elections is equally oligarchic: state campaigns are planned amidst consultations among the parliamentary leader, state president, general secretary and joint policy committee, but party leaders (in particular the parliamentary leader) make the final decisions. The role of the Executive is to discuss issues and, through the president, suggest matters for inclusion in the parliamentary leader's policy speech. In addition, the Executive is kept informed of the progress of preparations for the elections through the reports of the joint policy committee. For example, a typical report to the Executive in 1961 gave the date of the Premier's policy speech and indicated that, because of the current unpopularity of the federal government (owing to its economic policies), it had been decided that the campaign should emphasise that the state election was about state issues, that Victoria still had a lower rate of unemployment than any other state, and that the alternative to a Liberal government was minority government.¹

IMPLEMENTING THE CAMPAIGN

The campaign is waged at two levels -- electorate and central. The central campaign, financed from the central fund and conducted from the party headquarters, comprises the use of the mass media -- radio, T.V. and the metropolitan press.² The Central Office also arranges the

¹SE, 12 May 1961.

²Hayes Publicity Service Pty. Ltd. is called on for professional advice on campaign matters and for the preparation and placement of advertisements.

itineraries of the principal speakers, distributes the leader's policy speech to electorate committees and provides map blocks of each electorate. To help co-ordinate the various local contests it issues each candidate's campaign manager with a confidential election bulletin giving the plan of the campaign in detail. In addition it compiles a roneoed volume of electorate committee-room information in which is set out for each electorate such details as an outline map of its sub-divisions, and the names and addresses of its returning officer, Liberal candidate, electorate organiser (if there is one), and the candidate's campaign chairman and secretary.

Contesting the election is a more decentralised process than planning it. Within the framework of tactics and policies laid down by the party's leaders, as described above, each candidate wages his own campaign, using as far as possible the resources of the party organisation in his electorate. Electorate committees are thus responsible for such details as the printing and distribution of the candidate's manifesto and how-to-vote cards (the order of voting preferences having been determined by the party leaders),¹ arranging the candidate's meetings throughout the electorate, and advertising in the local press or by means of radio and T.V. scatters. The candidate and his local

¹The usual order for candidates from the main parties is: (1) Liberal, (2) C.P., (3) D.L.P., (4) A.L.P., (5) Communist. This may be changed by the nomination of independent candidates or the absence of a candidate from one or more of ^{the} parties listed. The decision is usually made by the party leaders, including the parliamentary leader, state president, general secretary, and a sub-committee of the Executive. Announcement to the press is left in the hands of the president and parliamentary leader.

machine are free to decide what style of campaign best suits the candidate, given the nature of the electorate and the money and helpers available. It is not, therefore, because electorates are lacking in autonomy that the techniques of campaigning within them are nearly uniform; it is the result of tradition-bound practices combined with centralised control over the political content of the party campaign. What the election is about does not vary much from one electorate to the next. The blue and white printed manifestos are almost standardised -- a photograph of the party leader and a brief accompanying statement, and photographs of the candidates, with personal details and supporting political blurb selected from the leader's policy speech.

Shortly before the campaign officially opens with the delivery of the policy speech, it is usual for the key personnel involved in each electorate -- the candidates, their campaign organisers and the chairman of the electorate committees -- to be called together for a briefing on the overall campaign by the general secretary and the party leader. As it is the party's practice to endorse candidates if possible ten to fourteen months before an election is due, some of them, especially in the marginal non-Liberal seats, will have been at work canvassing, attending functions, visiting branches in their electorates well before the ritual of the official campaign begins. They will have been helped throughout by a few of their close supporters who will also form the nucleus of their campaign committees. These informal structures spring up in most electorates. Their personnel are usually also office bearers in the constituted branches or electorate committees; but they are first and foremost groups of

activists with whom the candidates are on close terms and whose organising ability they trust. The formal units of the constituency organisations -- the electorate and finance committees -- play their necessary part in the preliminary stages of a campaign. The details of the campaign and a budget are submitted to a meeting of the electorate committee, the finance committee allocates funds to meet the budgeted expenses, and the various branches are assigned tasks. Yet the essence of a local campaign lies in the work of an informal structure comprising the candidate and a few experienced activists, who have probably been through it all before.

Among branch members, familiarity with the election routine oils the machinery of the campaign. A branch's first step in allocating activities among its activists is to check that the persons who performed the tasks last time are available to do them again. Newcomers are then 'fitted in' where they are needed. No campaign requires a completely new set of decisions, for example, as to who will be rostered into handing out how-to-vote cards, who will act as scrutineers, staff the committee room, organise transport on polling day, look after the postal votes or, if necessary, assist at a polling booth in an industrial electorate. To help the branches cope with the technicalities of an election, the Central Office has prepared a roneoed handbook summarising the electoral offences, explaining the requirements of postal, overseas, and absent voting, and providing 'hints' for canvassers, polling booth workers and scrutineers.

Despite the opinion of some activists ('We have worked very hard

for our local members and kept them in [parliament] so long'),¹ electioneering in suburban safe Liberal seats does not make heavy demands on the resources of their branches. Such electorates are usually compact in area and distributions of 'literature' are easy to accomplish. For their area, there are more branches in these electorates than any others. Supplies of finance and helpers are more than sufficient for local needs. In the metropolitan region, therefore, such constituencies are called on to contribute to the electoral resources of more marginal and industrial electorates. This 'helping hand' procedure, as it has been dubbed, would be more effective were it not for the parochial tendencies of electorate organisations.² Nonetheless, at each election useful amounts of money and manpower cross the Yarra River in Melbourne.³ Branches in wealthier Liberal seats to the south-east of the river are accustomed to forwarding sums of money, tagged for use in specified industrial electorates to the north and west, to their electorate committees. In 1966, for example, the Greythorn branch (Kooyong) allocated \$30 to Scullin, \$21 to Wills and \$40 to Batman -- all Labor-held seats -- while Kew North East donated \$40 to the Preston state electorate in 1964, and the Canterbury branch \$15.50 to the Reservoir state electorate in 1965.⁴ Not uncommonly, wealthy

¹Remark of (woman) activist, annual meeting, Kew South East branch, 10 April 1967.

²See Orlebeke, pp.128-30, for reference to a similar problem in N.S.W.

³The Yarra River forms a conspicuous socio-political boundary. See F. Lancaster Jones, 'A Social Ranking of Melbourne Suburbs', Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology, Vol.3, No.2, October 1967, p.105.

⁴Minutes of Greythorn branch, 21 September 1966; Minutes of Kew North East branch, (n.d.) August 1964; Minutes of Canterbury branch, 26 April 1965.

branches have found it more convenient to make additional payments towards the cost of hiring commissionaires to hand out how-to-vote cards in Labor electorates than to roster some of their own members for this purpose.¹ Recipient electorates may also receive a grant from the party's central fighting fund. Thus, in the 1966 federal elections the campaign in Darebin cost \$850, of which \$250 was contributed by the Central Office.² Assistance from the central fund fluctuates according to the state of the party's finances, and where the recipient electorate ranks in the party's scale of priorities. The main value of contesting industrial electorates (apart from giving ambitious activists a practice run) is to 'keep alive' the Liberal vote in those areas for the benefit of the Senate elections.³ Party leaders acknowledge this. Indeed, in 1961, the general secretary's report on the federal elections asserted that:

the work done in the Industrial Electorates by the Electorates of Balaclava, Chisholm, Fawkner, Higgins, Isaacs, Kooyong and the Young Liberal and Country Movement assisted materially in obtaining the third Senate vacancy.⁴

But the central organisation has been criticised in the past for its negative approach to such electorates. One candidate, for example, recounting his experience in the state Labor stronghold of Richmond, complained that he had been 'told to do nothing...beyond putting his name

¹E.g., Minutes of East Kew branch, 15 October 1958; 20 November 1961; Minutes of Deepdene branch, 11 March 1959.

²Verbatim notes of annual meeting of Kew South East branch, 10 April 1967. A further \$200 was contributed by the candidate.

³Senators are elected by a system of proportional representation.

⁴SE, 9 February 1962.

forward', since the party was not prepared to subsidize from its central funds anything more than a token campaign.¹ Candidates in industrial seats rarely subscribe to such a limited, if rational, view of their role. Most are anxious to mount a serious campaign, partly for their own satisfaction but also for the experience and the 'record' -- in many cases to strengthen their claim to preselection for a Liberal seat in the future. There is prestige to be gained in reducing the Labor share of the vote. Moreover, it is argued that a vigorous campaign in the industrial seats is likely to inhibit incumbent prominent Labor members from campaigning outside their electorates in support of colleagues in more marginal seats.

In addition to the resources transferred from Liberal strongholds, valuable assistance is provided in marginal and industrial electorates by the Young Liberal clubs which, often supporting candidates from their own ranks, are capable of mounting vigorous, and sometimes refreshingly unorthodox campaigns, usually with a greater emphasis on door-to-door canvassing and 'gimmickry' than is attempted in most electorates. Their efforts, as was seen in an earlier chapter, are sometimes supplemented by the Women's Section which, to give only one example, assisted the Young Liberals with the distribution of a special pamphlet in marginal electorates during the 1963 federal elections.²

For a number of years there has been little complaint about the

¹Minutes of General Meeting of Liberal Speakers Group, 20 July 1964.

²SE, 31 January 1964.

electoral adequacy of the grass-roots organisation -- largely because of the party's undeniable electoral success since 1955. The last major investigation undertaken by the Executive into the state of the organisation in certain electorates was in 1951-2, after the loss of Ballaarat and Wannon to the A.L.P., in the 1951 federal elections. The findings of the sub-committee appointed to the task were full of criticism. Of the Bendigo and Deakin electorates it reported having 'learnt a lot of disquieting facts'. It concluded that:

All we can report at the moment is that the situation in these swinging seats appears very alarming and there is a definite need for a very quick overhaul of our organisation.¹

In Lalor it reported that:

Of 11 Branches, 8 need a complete overhaul, and a new Branch should be established in Sunbury and Broadmeadows. Great difficulty was encountered in obtaining Executive officers for the Electorate Committee who were in a position or who were prepared to do any electorate work.

And in Ballaarat:

The position...is similar to other electorates. The Branches were all under strength and apathetic, and Mr. Pittard [the Liberal candidate in 1951] told the Committee that he only had six consistent helpers at the last elections... the work of the Organiser has not been too satisfactory, and in addition, he had been inadequately supervised.²

As we have already noted, although there was some soul-searching after the Country Party captured Indi and Wimmera in 1958, the electorate

¹Ibid., 8 February 1952.

²Ibid., 28 March 1952. There was no record of a report on the Wannon electorate. Both Ballaarat and Wannon were won again by the Liberals in 1955.

organisations escaped criticisms of the kind quoted above. Nor were the local organisations blamed for the party's continued electoral decline in these seats. Commenting on this trend in his report after the 1963 federal elections, McConnell did not suggest any deficiencies of organisation; instead he asserted rather lamely that the main problems were the 'difficulty of "fighting" with nothing to fight about', and secondly, the need for 'some arrangements with the Government re adequate support'.¹ Similarly, after the set-back in the federal elections in 1961, which admittedly was felt less in Victoria than in most of the other states, McConnell was able to report: 'The Organisation worked well. The drop in votes cannot be attributed to the organisation in the electorates'.²

How adequate the grass-roots organisation is judged to be as an electoral machine depends largely on election results. It can also be assessed according to such criteria as the level of party membership and its financial resources. On all three counts the Liberal Party scores favourably. The level of membership and, more importantly, the degree of activism within the party, have provided at least a stable basis for an electoral machine, while one sector of the organisation — the Young

¹Ibid., 31 January 1964. The implication of this is that federal ministers were reluctant to support the campaigns of Liberal candidates in seats which were held by their coalition partners.

²Ibid., 9 February 1962. The overall Liberal vote in Victoria declined by 3 per cent, but no seats were lost. In other states the Liberal trends in percentage vote and seats won were:

	<u>% vote</u>	<u>seats</u>
N.S.W.	-4.9	-4
Qld.	-4.1	-7
W.A.	+4.2	-1
TAS.	-5.9	no change
S.A.	-4.7	"
Commonwealth	-3.7	-12

Liberal Movement -- has strengthened markedly in recent years. Furthermore, as was noted in Chapter 9, electorate finances have achieved a new resilience as a result of the greater emphasis on bank orders. At least for the time being, therefore, the organisation at election time is a healthy 'handmaid' to the parliamentary parties.

The fairly frequent ritual of an election campaign is an important event for electors generally, but even more so for the active members of a major political party resolved on winning elections. The meaning of their party membership is never clearer than during a campaign, when all members subscribe to the purpose for which the party's resources are then expended. It is a unifying event. Grass-roots activity increases. A campaign creates work and helping at elections is the whole point of party membership for many 'lesser' activists. A large number of branches do little else. On the whole, the party's organisational structure and the scale of its resources are well adjusted to the purpose of contesting elections. The ritual is the more rewarding for having been so often a successful one.

CHAPTER 13

POLICY MAKING

All Australian parties are among other things mechanisms for applying pressure to members of parliament...¹

...the branches must at all times press, through the State Council, for the continuous translation of the Platform of the Party into the broad pattern of legislation of the Government so that the way of life enjoyed in the State corresponds with the ideals to which they subscribe.²

In the Victorian Liberal Party there is a strongly-held myth about the making of party policy. Most members believe, or at least are prepared to agree unblushingly with, the officially-publicised view that 'policy is determined by rank and file members operating through their branches to State Council'.³ The myth is founded on Clause 33 of the constitution, which states that: 'The Council shall be the governing body of the Party, and shall determine the Platform and Policy of the Party'. Thus, although members differ greatly in the extent to which they are interested and active in policy making, nearly all would agree that the party offers them an opportunity to influence its policy if they wish to. In this respect, Liberal Party membership usually

¹D.W. Rawson, Labor in Vain?, p.37.

²Report submitted by the Joint Standing Committee on State Policy to the State Executive on 'Relations Between the State Parliamentary Party and the Organisation', July 1959.

³'Liberal Voice', Herald, 26 February 1959.

conveys a sense of political efficacy. Not many members, however, would wish to claim that they should be the final arbiters of party policy. Built into the myth is an acceptance that the politicians not only have a rightful place in the policy-making process, but, having access to more information than other members, they are better placed to judge the political or technical feasibility of a policy. Thus, to varying degrees, members compromise both the myth and the party constitution which enshrines it. Party policy is not simply what the State Council determines; rather it is the actions or principles with which the parliamentary party publicly identifies itself. Above all party policy is crystallised in the utterances of the parliamentary leader. The extra-parliamentary organisation may or may not be a major factor in the formulation of some of these policies.¹ Furthermore, any importance it has is the result of the activities of a relatively few policy-oriented members who, more than most, believe that the rank-and-file ought to have an effective voice in party policy. If parties are, in Davies' words, 'conveyor-belts' of their members' policy proposals,² this group of activists ensures that the Liberal conveyor-belt is kept in some sort of working order. As some of them have asserted, 'the Organisation must follow up on its resolutions of policy and fight for them in the policy committees'.³

¹Cf.: 'At the State level it is impossible to give a general answer to the question "who makes policy?"' (Louise Overacker, Australian Parties in a changing society: 1945-1967, Melbourne, 1968, p.199).

²A.F. Davies, Australian Democracy, Longmans, 1958, p.141.

³Liberal Speakers Group, Survey of Organisation, 1965.

As this indicates, it is not enough for the non-parliamentary section of the party to have a formal policy-making machinery; the machinery must be driven by a sense of purpose and conviction. In this regard the Liberal Party and its predecessors are often thought of as deficient, at least in comparison with the A.L.P. Because of their historical traditions and organisational principles, Labor parties are assumed to be both more policy-oriented and more effective 'conveyer belts' of their members' demands than Liberal parties. It is difficult empirically to confirm or refute this view in a one-party study, but it is likely that in Victoria the Liberal Party has eliminated much of the generic difference that once distinguished non-Labor parties from the A.L.P.

THE PLACE OF THE ORGANISATION : TRENDS

From the beginning, the leading members of the Liberal Party's extra-parliamentary organisation took a more active role in policy making than their predecessors in the U.A.P. The architects of the Liberal Party intended it to be more than a revamped electoral machine. A little idealistically, they envisaged a mass party in which members, meeting in their branches, discussed policy and channelled their ideas through the organisation to their parliamentary representatives. They emphasised that, far more than in the past, major party policies would be formulated by the two wings of the party in consultation.

This was a direct reaction to practices associated with the U.A.P.

During the rapid electoral decline of the federal U.A.P. in the early 1940s, activists had often called for a more effective voice in influencing party policy, and had stressed the need for closer liaison between the parliamentarians and their supporting organisations.¹ To meet these needs, the joint policy committees were introduced into the Liberal Party's formal structure at both state and federal levels of organisation. They were to be joint committees of parliamentarians and activists. Thus the Joint Standing Committee on State Policy was defined as a body 'consisting of four members of the State Parliament, selected by the State Parliamentary Party, and four non-Parliamentary members of the State Council selected by such Council'.²

Much was made at the time - as, indeed, since then - of the joint committees, for they embodied the ideals of party unity and democracy that the U.A.P. had so conspicuously lacked. As Menzies explained it, the purpose of the committees was to 'enable Parliamentary leaders and their colleagues to be brought directly into contact with the ideas of outside members of their organisation'.³ Through the joint committees and the

¹E.g., Argus, 7 December 1940; Australian Statesman, Vol.II, No.2, February 1941, p.2; ibid., Vol.II, No.10, October 1941, p.2; ibid., Vol.II, No.11, November 1941, p.3.

²Constitution, 1946, Section XIV, Clause 1.

³Australian Statesman, Vol. XV, No.1, January 1945, p.2. The idea of the joint policy committees was not new. In 1941 there had been talk of setting up a Consultative Committee within the U.A.P., the purpose of which was 'to facilitate the interchange of ideas between the organisations [supporting the U.A.P.] and also to ensure greater co-operation with Parliamentary members who would be called into frequent consultation' (ibid., Vol.II, No.11, November 1941, p.3).

party's councils, he continued, members would 'be able to exercise due influence upon the form and content of...statements of policy'.¹ Thus the myth was born. In fact, however, the joint policy committees were defined as advisory bodies and the function of the councils was stated broadly as 'the general conduct of the business and affairs' of their respective state Divisions.² The party's structure thus took account of the demand from activists for a larger role in policy making and yet retained the traditional non-Labor principle that politicians, more especially the parliamentary leader, were primarily responsible for party policy. At the Albury conference in December 1944, Menzies stated the principle in its clearest form when he drew a distinction between 'Parliamentary leaders who propound policy and those in the organisations who organise in support of it'.³

But in the peculiar context of Victorian state politics between 1945 and 1955 traditional non-Labor principles were largely irrelevant. Menzies' description of the role of non-parliamentary members as that of exercising 'due influence' on party policy stood out as a meaningless euphemism. The leaders of the organisation claimed a more positive role for themselves and invoked the powers of the constitution in support of their claim. Consequently the course of events in these years illustrates the historical tendency, referred to by Duverger, for an expanded party

¹Ibid.

²Constitution, 1946, Section XIV, Clause 4.

³Australian Statesman, Vol. XV, No.1, January 1945, p.2.

organisation to give rise to rivalry between the leaders of the two wings of the party.¹

Party organisations set up to support existing parliamentary groups are said to be more subservient to their elected representatives than organisations of extra-parliamentary origin.² The Labor Party is usually regarded as an example of the latter type, and the Nationalist-U.A.P.-Liberal parties as examples of the former.³ But from the perspective of the Liberal Party's origin its location in this category is at least ambiguous. There is a good case for arguing that the Liberal Party was 'born and bred' as much outside parliament as 'in the shade of the Chamber'.⁴ As we saw in Chapter 3, men outside parliament took the initiative in moves to organise a new non-Labor party well before Menzies called the Canberra conference. Among those taking a leading part, for example, was W.H. Anderson, who became the first state president of the Liberal Party, holding office from 1945 to 1948, and serving a second term in 1950-2. Yet, as we have seen, Anderson organised a rival party to the U.A.P. in the 1943 federal elections. Certainly in the preliminary moves to reorganise the non-Labor forces neither he nor the businessmen of the

¹Duverger, Political Parties, p.190.

²Ibid., pp.xxxv-vi.

³J.D.E. Plant, however, has questioned this distinction in early Victorian state party politics. He contends that the parliamentarians in the first Liberal Party could not create an efficient extra-parliamentary machine, let alone control it (Aspects of Commonwealth Non-Labor Party Organization in Victoria, 1905-1914, B.A. Hons. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1957, p.3 [footnote]).

⁴Duverger, p.xxxv.

I.P.A. were acting on behalf of incumbent parliamentarians. The object of Anderson and others was to build an effective new party which the parliamentarians would then be invited to join.¹

Those who assumed leadership positions in the party in its formative years did so with a strong sense of purpose. They were concerned to help shape the course of party politics, and not to act merely as office bearers in a 'handmaid' organisation. As well as W.H. Anderson, the new Liberal Party in its early years attracted three other leaders -- Magnus Cormack, Donald Mackinnon and J.M. Anderson -- who stood in no awe of politicians, least of all state politicians. All served terms as president of the party and none was disposed either to adopt a passive role within the organisation, or to see the extra-parliamentary organisation take a passive role within the party. The prompt expulsion by the organisation of six parliamentary members (and the consequent electoral defeat of three of them) in October 1945,² less than a year after the party was formed, indicated a distribution of power quite unlike any that had obtained in the U.A.P.

The questions of party discipline and the determination of party policy were often entangled, and both provided the non-parliamentary

¹ Cf. the more conventional view of the formation of the party: 'The initiative in the movement... seemed to come more from parliamentarians looking for firmer electoral support than from "thousands of people desperately anxious to travel in the same direction," [Menzies] and the party labored under the initial handicap of seeming to be created from the top down rather than from the bottom up' (Overacker, The Australian Party System, p.267).

² See above, p.104.

leadership with occasions to assert itself, especially during the politically-troubled years of 1950-52.¹ Thus, towards the end of 1949, the State Executive pressed for the expulsion from the parliamentary party of two 'rebellious' Liberal M.L.A.s, F.L. Edmunds (Hawthorn) and J.S. Lechte (Oakleigh). Both members had criticised aspects of governmental policy to the extent of threatening to vote to displace the minority Liberal government;² and both crossed swords with the Minister for Housing, Arthur Warner, M.L.C., an influential politician with a strong following in the party's organisation. Furthermore, Edmunds objected to the extension of hotel trading hours which the non-parliamentary leadership favoured.³ Their expulsion, which the parliamentary leader, T.T. Hollway, at first resisted in view of the delicate position of his government,⁴ was finally carried on the vote of the parliamentary party in February 1950; four days before this, at a meeting addressed by the Premier, the Executive had resolved to proceed with Lechte's and Edmunds' expulsion from the party in the event of their being expelled or retiring from the parliamentary party.⁵

Before this the State Executive had reacted to their disloyal behaviour by issuing a homily on what it referred to as 'certain rights and responsibilities of the Party Organisation'. This said nothing new,

¹See above, pp.105-8. The fullest account of these years is in West pp.12-37.

²Argus, 17 September 1949.

³Ibid., 1 December 1949.

⁴West, p.12.

⁵SE, 10 February 1950. Their expulsion from the party was subsequently moved and carried at the State Council of 31 March - 1 April 1950. This action required 28 days notice, hence the Executive's early preparations.

but was intended as a warning to dissident politicians that the extra-parliamentary organisation was to be treated as an agent of party discipline. Thus it reaffirmed the organisation's 'right' to determine the party's platform, endorse candidates, expel members, express its views to the parliamentarians, especially on 'any matters affecting the public esteem and the standing of the Party', and consult with the parliamentary party through the joint policy committee. It concluded by alluding to the organisation's 'responsibility to the electors' to ensure that each Liberal parliamentarian 'conducts himself in accordance with the objects and best interests of the Party and remains loyal to the team he volunteered to join'.¹

Soon after the expulsion of Lechte and Edmunds, the general inter-party situation and the specific issue of the redistribution of electoral boundaries provoked the extra-parliamentary organisation into another assertion of its authority in relation to the parliamentarians. In June 1950, after the state elections, a minority C.P. government took office with Labor's support. In an attempt to undermine this alliance the Liberal parliamentary leader, T.T. Hollway, with the backing of party officials,² announced a policy of electoral redistribution on the basis of two Assembly seats to every commonwealth division, coupled with the introduction of proportional representation and adult franchise for the Legislative Council.

¹Ibid., 23 September 1949.

²West, p.14.

The procedure for arriving at this policy fulfilled the principle of consultation between parliamentary and non-parliamentary leaders, but was nonetheless decidedly unusual. The policy was announced by the parliamentary leader before it had been approved by either the joint policy committee or the parliamentary party. Although it was subsequently adopted by both the policy committee and, on the latter's recommendation, the State Executive,¹ some of the Liberal parliamentarians of both houses remained strongly opposed to it in principle - as well as disapproving the manner in which it had been contrived. They therefore advised the Executive that the parliamentary representatives on the joint policy committee 'had no authority to commit the Parliamentary Party' in a matter which had not been resolved in the party room, and added that the policy committee should function as a consultative body whose decisions became effective only by consent of both the State Executive and the parliamentary party.² Meanwhile, the State Council ratified the policy of 'two-for-one' electoral redistribution at its September meeting. At the same time the Council delegates approved a branch resolution which stated that as policy-making was 'the prerogative of the State Council... all groups within the Party [were] specifically debarred from announcing changes of policy not previously approved by the State Council or the State Executive'.³

The authoritative policy-making role of the State Council was confirmed at the Executive's November meeting in 1950. Discussing the

¹The latter on 4 August 1950.

²SE, 10 November 1950.

³SC, 6-7 September 1950.

situation which had developed within the party during the preceding months, the members of the Executive agreed that since the Council was the party's 'governing body' its decisions were to be 'binding on the Parliamentary Party'.¹ In this mood the Executive in addition referred two motions to the joint policy committee, both dealing with the question of party discipline:

That it be an instruction to the Qualifications Committee² to notify Electorate Committees of any Parliamentary Member who violates the Party policy by not carrying out the wishes of the State Council.

That as from 10th. November, 1950 all candidates seeking endorsement shall be asked to pledge themselves in support of the Party's Platform and Constitution and determinations of the State Council.³

There is no evidence of the joint policy committee's adopting the resolutions and they were never subsequently incorporated into the party's constitution. But they reveal the muscle-flexing inclination of the extra-parliamentary section under certain circumstance.

Of more significance were the constitutional amendments drawn up by the Executive at its very next meeting in December. These specified in unambiguous terms the organisation's policy-making powers vis-à-vis the parliamentary party. The Executive did not immediately press the amendments, but in substance they foreshadowed the changes that were to be introduced in 1953. Inter alia the amendments declared

¹SE, 10 November 1950.

²A sub-committee of the State Executive whose task was to enquire into the credentials of candidates seeking pre-selection.

³Ibid., 10 November 1950.

first, that the State Council was to be 'the governing body of the Party' and was to 'determine the Platform and Policy of the Party'. The Council was also given the power to 'declare which decisions [were] decisions of major policy'. Secondly, the parliamentary party was to 'be responsible for the implementation of the Party Platform and Policy decisions of the State Council'. Thirdly, the Executive was then empowered to declare any member of the state parliamentary party ineligible for selection as a candidate if he voted against or 'wilfully' failed to vote for 'any measure implementing any part of the Platform', or failed 'to carry out any decisions of the State Council declared by it to be a decision of major policy'. Finally, the joint policy committee was reaffirmed in its role as an advisory body, but was to be 'consulted whenever practicable' before the parliamentary party acted on matters arising in parliament 'upon which the State Council [had] not laid down a policy'.¹

With minor alterations these amendments were implemented in 1953 and are to be found in the present constitution. In 1953, however, the provision for the Council's classifying certain decisions as 'major policy' was omitted, and in relation to this the Executive's power to declare members ineligible for selection was merged into a general power to withhold endorsement.

Since 1953, therefore, the constitution has clearly given the State

¹Ibid., 8 December 1950.

Council formal ultimate authority in the making of party policy.¹ This is a significant departure from the party's original constitution. In theory it places the parliamentary party in a position subordinate to the State Council, a relationship which is more in accordance with the principles of orthodox Labor than non-Labor.² The 1953 amendments, in fact, have been

¹See Constitution, 1965, Clauses 33, 40, 48.

The constitutional provisions of the Victorian Liberal Party thus provide a contradictory case to Epstein's generalisation that 'there seems to be no tendency for non-labor parties, even when they develop membership organisations in the same size range as labor parties, to give them any constitutional basis for policy-making authority' (Political Parties in Western Democracies, p.309).

²In this respect it is noteworthy that the Victorian constitution has been interpreted by a former vice-president of the party in the following way:

There is a recognised principle [in the Labor party] which is well-established that it is the organisation which has the determining voice in policy.

On the other hand, the Liberal Party has no such recognised principle even though it is embodied, quite clearly, in its Constitution. There has been no occasion when directives styled as such, have been issued... [But] it is a matter of words only as to whether there is a "direction" or not from the Party's governing body, or from the body charged with the conducting of the Party's affairs in conformity with the spirit and platform of the Party [i.e. the Executive]. It is only the State Council which can make policy in respect of which the Parliamentary members have constitutional obligations. "Directive" is but a word and so for State Council to carry a resolution clearly indicating action is as much "directive" as an explicit motion "directing" a course of action to be followed. The Constitution grants no power of issuing directives...

It would seem, therefore, technically correct ... that there is no power in State Council or any other wing of the party, to "direct" the Parliamentary Party. But there is a responsibility in the Parliamentary Party, as well as a duty imposed by the Constitution on Parliamentary members, to give effect to what the Constitution provides for. Consequently, although no direction is permitted there is no need for it as the obligation is the same as if there had been a directive (Minority Report of State Council Resolutions Sub-Committee to State Executive, July 1959).

referred to in a report to the State Executive by a party office bearer
as

the full culmination of the movement ideal which had
been launched in 1945... the adoption by the organisation...
of the principle of determination of policy and party
government residing in the forum of the "movement" --
the State Council.¹

And the same source added:

So long as there is an organisation which is composed
of rank and file members there will always be a demand
for rank and file control -- just because rank and file
control is the control of the majority, and democracy
has enshrined majority rule...

The new constitution did have implications for the democratic powers of
the ranke-and-file, but the opinion cited above gives a too high-
principled view of the nature of the changes. Rather they must be
interpreted against the specific background of Victorian politics at
the time and also the positive political role which the non-parliamentary
leaders, who had been associated with the party's formative years, claimed
for themselves. Thus, the strength of the Country Party, the resulting
unstable parliamentary situation (as evidenced in a succession of coalition
and minority governments), and disagreement within the Liberal Party over
the terms of electoral reform provided the occasions for the non-
parliamentary leaders' assertion of their influence in the party. They
sponsored the constitutional changes in order to strengthen their own
hands in a period of intra-party controversy. The changes were based on

¹Ibid. This confirms the observation made by Louise Overacker that
'there are members of the party who stress the importance of control
by the membership, and in some quarters there is a disposition to
develop the "movement" idea' (The Australian Party System, p.270).

pragmatic rather than doctrinaire considerations.

Between 1953 and 1955 the organisational wing of the party was in a unique position to consolidate the ground it had just gained and to play a significant part in the formulation of party policy. Other factors besides the operation of the new constitution contributed to this. Above all the party was out of office and had no incentive to try to gain it by parliamentary manoeuvre, for in 1952-5 a Labor government was securely in power, supported by an absolute majority in the Legislative Assembly. Secondly, the numerical strength of the Liberal parliamentary party was drastically depleted by its defeat in the 1952 state elections and by the expulsion of the members of the Hollway group. With the number of Liberal members in the Legislative Assembly reduced to eleven, the party's strength was located in the organisation outside parliament rather than in it. Furthermore, the parliamentary party suffered two changes of leadership in quick succession, the first when L.G. Norman lost his seat in the 1952 elections, and the second less than six months later when, in May 1953, his successor, T.D. Oldham, was killed in a plane crash on the way to the coronation. The deputy-leader, H.E. Bolte, was then elected leader while A. Rylah replaced him as deputy. In contrast to these changes, the ex-paratrooper, J.M. Anderson, presided firmly over the organisational wing from 1952 to 1956.

Close collaboration between the parliamentary and non-parliamentary sections was the keynote to the party's policy-making activities immediately before the 1955 elections. Thus, in November 1953, the Executive called on the joint policy committee 'to prepare and submit to

the Executive as soon as possible recommendations on the matters of State interest'.¹ Thereafter, throughout 1954 and 1955 the policy committee met with a frequency never since equalled;² policies formulated by this body were submitted to the Executive for approval and to the Council for ratification. Other policy items moved upwards from the grass-roots of the organisation. On a number of matters, branch resolutions agreed to by the Council were incorporated directly into the party's election platform.³

After the state elections of 1955, therefore, the Bolte government took office on the basis of a programme which the organisation had played a large part in formulating. For the next three years, except when legislation was frustrated by a hostile C.P.-A.L.P. alliance in the Legislative Council, branch members often experienced the satisfaction of seeing the government implementing 'their' policies. Thus, between 1953 and 1958, myth and reality in the Liberal Party's policy-making process coincided as nearly as could be expected. Perhaps for the first time since the party's formation, it was functioning in the manner that its founders had intended.

Once the party was in office, however, it was inevitable that the relative importance of the non-parliamentary organisation's policy-making role should decline. The structures of government and the public service

¹SE, 13 November 1953.

²Fortnightly according to the President's Report to State Council, 24 August 1954.

³SE, 11 February, 25 March 1955; SC, 18-19 February, 19-20 August 1953; 7-8 April, 24-5 August 1954; 2-3 March 1955; Age, 6 May 1955.

became the main sources of policy; ministers grew familiar with the details and trends of policy within their departments and developed confidence in their role as legislators and administrators. While it is part of a minister's job to listen and appear receptive to policy proposals from the non-parliamentary rank-and-file, privately he is often cynical about their contribution to governmental policies. All too often resolutions at the State Council -- with its brash claim to determine policy -- imply trivial criticisms of policy or are impractical or ignore what is already being done. Ministers concede, as they must, that there is a place in the party for a 'policy-making' body like the Council, but from their vantage point they see its role rather differently from the rank-and-file adherents of the party's policy-making myth.

Some tension is inherent between the parliamentary and organisational sections of a governing party whose constitution accords its non-parliamentary members an authoritative role in the formulation of party policy. Despite the apathy of most members, there are always a few who look upon the organisation's policy-making activities as of prime importance. It is their self-assigned role to watch over the party's policy-making procedures to see that the constitutional gains of earlier years are not lost to the encroachments of the politicians. Thus, in 1958, shortly after the Bolte government was returned for its second term of office, the State Council was persuaded to adopt, under suspension of standing orders, a motion expressing concern at 'the number of resolutions passed by the State Council which [were] not acted upon by the Party's

Parliamentary Representatives'. The Council instructed the Executive to investigate the position and to suggest ways of 'asserting the democracy of the Party'.¹ The occurrence of this resolution was not surprising: the importance of the extra-parliamentary organs in the formulation of party policy was waning perceptibly in the face of an increasingly confident and dominating parliamentary party. The situation was the reverse of that in 1953-5, and the reinstatement of the more traditional non-Labor balance of power within the party was frustrating for some activists.

Following the State Council's instructions, the Executive undertook an enquiry into the fate of Council resolutions. The investigation showed that the suspicion voiced by many, that the parliamentary party was reneging on policy resolutions emanating from the State Council, was in fact largely unfounded.² Nonetheless, the feeling lingered among some that with the party in government the balance of policy-making power had swung too far towards the politicians. In a notably critical review of the organisation by the Speakers Group it was contended that:

The Liberal administration tends, after some years, to pay too little regard to the policy decisions laid down by the State Council of the Party. There is need for maximum consultation by the various elements of the Party and there is evidence that the Parliamentary wing tends to regard itself as expert and go its own way.

¹SC, 4-5 March 1959.

²See below pp.408-11.

Too many decisions of a vital nature are taken by our governments without consulting the organisation and the cynicism engendered, soon percolates down to the ordinary member.¹

The complaints in this passage about a lack of consultation between the sections of the party refer chiefly to the decline in importance of the joint policy committee after 1955. This institution,² despite the party ideals embodied in it, has always functioned erratically and has a tendency to atrophy, especially when the party is in power. It is most active before and in connection with an election campaign. At other times pressure from the organisation for more frequent meetings of the committee is a barometer of rising dissatisfaction with the performance of the parliamentary party. Whenever a need is felt for 'closer liaison' between the sections of the party, activists remember the joint policy committee. As originally constituted, the policy committee was to meet at the discretion of the chairman - the leader of the state parliamentary party - with the added proviso that one half of the members of the committee could require a meeting to be held.³

¹ Liberal Speakers Group, Survey of Organisation, 1965.

² As presently constituted, the Joint Standing Committee on State Policy comprises: (a) eight state parliamentarians selected by the state parliamentary party; (b) one Victorian federal parliamentarian selected by the Victorian members of the federal parliamentary party; (c) eight members of the State Executive selected by the Executive with equal representation between the sexes and between metropolitan and rural branches (Constitution, Clause 45).

The leader of the state parliamentary party or his nominee acts as chairman of the committee (Clause 46).

³ Constitution, 1946, Section XIV, Clauses 2 and 3.

Requests for more frequent meetings began in 1947 (when, in the interests of liaison between the wings of the party, the Executive also suggested the idea of arranging a tea to be attended by the members of the Executive and all state parliamentarians).¹ Matters became more serious after that: in February 1950, the Executive again resolved that the joint policy committee should meet more frequently,² and a joint meeting of the Executive and the parliamentary party in March agreed that the committee would meet 'at least every two weeks' until the 1950 state elections, and thereafter at a frequency to be determined by another joint meeting of the two bodies.³

Among the constitutional amendments introduced in 1953 was one intended to guarantee a minimum number of meetings of the policy committee. The new constitution stipulated that the committee would meet 'at least quarterly'.⁴ Furthermore, in 1954, the Executive resolved that the committee should report to each meeting of the Executive, and that its reports were to take precedence over those of other committees.⁵ Until 1955, as we have already noted, the balance of power within the party ensured that the policy committee did in fact meet frequently, and that it played a prominent part in the formulation of the 1955 election

¹SE, 26 March 1947.

²Ibid., 10 February 1950.

³Minutes of Joint Meeting of State Executive and Parliamentary Party, 8 March 1950. There is no record of a further meeting having been held.

⁴Constitution, 1965, Clause 47.

⁵SE, 19 November 1954.

programme. By 1959, however, despite the constitution, the policy committee's meetings had become irregular, with long periods when none was called.¹ From July 1956 to April 1959 it reported only five times to the Executive.² After the Executive's enquiry in 1959 into the organisation's policy-making procedures, the committee again began reporting more often, mainly on the policy items which the Executive regularly passed on/^{to}it for its consideration. In 1962, however, an old theme recurred when the Executive expressed its opinion that the parliamentary party was 'out of touch with the views of the State Executive' and that the joint policy committee should meet more regularly and should report to the Executive 'as required'.³ Even more recently the Executive adopted a motion from one of its members which expressed the need for closer and more frequent consultation between the parliamentary and organisational sections of the party on matters of current legislation:

That in the opinion of State Executive the effective functioning of the Joint Standing Committee on State Policy can only be achieved if State Executive can advise its representatives on current or projected legislation; and that, to this end, the Executive's representatives on the Joint Policy Committee take all possible steps consistent with the Party Constitution to enable State Executive to express opinions on contentious current or projected legislation.⁴

¹Minority Report of State Council Resolutions Sub-Committee.

²Ibid.

³SE, 11 May 1962. To achieve a more integrated party structure the Executive also considered increasing the number of parliamentary representatives on the Executive.

⁴Ibid., 10 December 1965.

As a result of this motion, a meeting of the joint policy committee subsequently discussed the question of liaison between the committee, the parliamentary party and the State Executive.¹

The joint committee has never functioned as effectively as some party members believe it should. Its purpose was originally defined simply as that of advising the state parliamentary party on matters of state policy.² In 1953 this function was expanded to include advising the State Executive as well, but more significantly it was then stipulated that the joint committee was to be consulted 'wherever practicable' before the parliamentary party acted on issues 'upon which the State Council has not laid down a policy'.³ The committee, however, is still not used for this purpose in a systematic way, although informal consultation between the Premier and party officials is partly a substitute.

Some activists feel that it is both possible and desirable to put into practice more truly the procedures indicated by the constitution. But in the absence of any major intra-party conflict to lend fire to the issue there is unlikely to be any radical change in the use of the joint policy committee. While the Executive's resolution referred to above

¹Ibid., 7 July 1966.

²Constitution, 1946, Section XIV, Clause 4.

³Constitution, 1965, Clause 48, The clause reads in full:

The function of the Committee shall be to advise the State Parliamentary Party and the State Executive upon matters of State Policy. In the event of any matter arising for determination in Parliament upon which the State Council has not laid down a policy the Committee shall be consulted wherever practicable before the Parliamentary Party determines the action to be taken.'

reaffirmed a practice with which all of its members agreed, it did not arise from any serious dissatisfaction with the status quo. On the contrary, only a few months before this, the President's Standing Committee had replied to the criticisms in the Speakers Group's 'white paper' on relations between the wings of the party, in euphoric terms:

...the Organisation and Parliamentary wing work in very close co-operation through the Joint Standing Committee on State Policy and also through the Executive Committees.

Both Leaders, Federal and State, have done a magnificent job for the Party and have the confidence, of the Back Benchers and the Organisation as a whole.¹

And members at all levels of the organisation would generally have concurred with this view. Whatever grounds there might have been for the opinions voiced in the 'white paper', its criticisms went far beyond the prevailing mood of most members at the time. Indeed, only once since the introduction of the amended constitution in 1953 has there been evidence of widespread scepticism amongst activists of the efficacy of the party's policy-making procedures. The immediate cause of this was the raising of parliamentarians' salaries in 1959, in defiance of the expressed wish of the State Council, which in August 1958 had resolved that it 'would strongly disapprove of any increase in Parliamentary salaries at the present time'.² As a result the Council met in August of the following year in an unusually defiant mood: it censured the politicians for increasing their salaries and pensions; it heckled the parliamentary

¹SE, 9 July 1965.

²SC, 27-8 August 1958.

leader, Henry Bolte, when he claimed that his government had obeyed as many of the Council's resolutions as possible; and it narrowly rejected by 138 votes to 110 a resolution which reminded parliamentarians that the State Council was the party's policy-making and governing body.¹

Another reason why the status of the joint policy committee in particular and the structure of the policy-making machinery in general have changed little in the last decade is that the leader, Sir Henry Bolte, is satisfied with things as they are. He believes that the parliamentary party should be free to act on issues as it sees fit and, moreover, is convinced that he is already sufficiently aware of the views of the non-parliamentary leaders -- or, if necessary, is able to find them out through informal channels.

The general conclusion must be that the party's policy-making procedures have become adjusted to the long period of Liberal state government and to an absence of divisive issues of the kind that split the party in the early 1950s.

POLICY-MAKING PROCEDURES

The policy-making role of the organisation is centred on the State Council which, as we have seen, has been given the constitutional authority to 'determine' party policy. Resolutions flow into the Council from two directions -- the State Executive and the branches.

Although few in number compared with branch resolutions, some of

¹Herald, 19 August 1959.

the most important policies put before the Council have been sponsored by the Executive. The Council invariably ratifies them. One of the first examples of this procedure was the Council's approval of the 'two-for-one' plan for electoral redistribution in 1950. But the procedure was used most frequently and effectively when the party was in opposition between 1952 and 1955. During this time the Council was asked to ratify several major policies which had been formulated in the joint policy committee and approved by the Executive. Thus, at least in a formal sense, the State Council fulfilled its role of 'determining' the party's basic policies on such questions as orderly marketing, liquor reform, traffic regulation and control, off-course betting, and housing.¹

Since 1955, however, this procedure has rarely been used, a fact attributable in part no doubt to the decline of the joint policy committee as a policy-formulating organ when the Liberals are in government. Thus, in August 1968, when the Executive sponsored a resolution calling for reform of the law on abortion, it was only the third policy recommendation from this body since 1955.² The other occasions were in August 1959, when it requested the Council to rescind an earlier resolution calling for the abolition of the Egg Board, for it had been discovered belatedly that the policy of abolition contradicted previously existing party policy, and in 1960, when the Executive laid down a policy in relation to the baking of bread at the weekend.³

¹SC, 1-2 October 1952; 18-19 February 1953; 2-3 March 1955.

²This does not include resolutions which, having been referred to the Executive by the Council, are later recommended back by the Executive for adoption.

³The Executive, however, has sponsored many constitutional changes. In
(cont.)

Thus, virtually all of the policy resolutions on the Council's agendas are sent in by branches. Between August 1957 and March 1967, for example, they bombarded the Council with nearly 900 resolutions, more than 500 of which were carried.¹ These ranged over a wide field of subject matter from the trivial and parochial to issues of national or state-wide importance.² To cope with them there is not one policy-making procedure but several.

True to the party's policy-making myth, some branch resolutions are passed by the Council and implemented without fuss as government policy. These are always straightforward proposals having obvious merit, usually non-partisan in character and costing little to implement. Recent examples are the opening of a shop in Melbourne for the sale of government publications and parliamentary papers, and the establishment also in Melbourne of a Citizens Advice Bureau.³ The apolitical nature of many such resolutions does not detract from their importance in the eyes of most rank-and-file members for whom 'making' or 'influencing' party policy simply means causing action to be taken. In helping to perpetuate the party myth that members make policy, a few resolutions of this kind have a significance out of proportion to their numbers and content.

Technically or politically 'difficult' resolutions are usually

August 1968 it also submitted to the Council a resolution on federal aid to Indonesia.

¹This includes many resolutions referred from the Council to the Executive but subsequently lost on the latter's recommendation.

²See Appendix A.

³SC, 24-5 February 1965.

referred by the Council to the Executive for further investigation. If resolutions agreed to in the Council are to be regarded officially as party policy, the organisation's policy-making procedures must take into account certain of the Council's obvious deficiencies as a deliberative body, in particular its unwieldy size, the uneven political resources of delegates, and the pressure of time under which it meets. As a result the Executive has assumed a major role in policy making: it has become by far the most important organisational body in this field with an internal structure and procedures adjusted to the fact that the party is in government. Thus, in 1960, the Executive replaced its system of ad hoc committees by a number of standing policy sub-committees which are chaired by a minister, and which correspond closely to the structure of governmental departments.¹

Resolutions referred from the Council to the Executive are allocated to the appropriate sub-committees where their merits and weaknesses are further examined and the relevant minister's views sought. When this has been done the sub-committee reports to the Executive, recommending whether or not it thinks the resolution should be proceeded with. The Executive nearly always adopts the recommendations of its sub-committees and passes them on to the Council as an item in 'business arising'. In this form the Council in turn invariably ratifies the original decisions of the Executive sub-committees. More often than not branch resolutions which are subjected to this procedure fail to gain the

¹See above, p.212.

approval of the minister or the sub-committee and consequently are not recommended to the Council for ratification as party policy. Investigation into policy proposals often brings to light, as it is intended to, their impracticalities. But there is no doubt also that the ministers' opinions carry great weight with the members of the sub-committees and are often decisive in determining the result of the investigation. On balance the influence of ministers is negative. There are many cases in fact of sub-committees abandoning their investigation of a resolution once the minister concerned had argued against it.

Ministerial influence is just as decisive, however, when it is positive. Thus, in a rather unusual case in 1957, the Minister for Transport not only agreed with the proposals in a branch resolution forwarded from the Council, but added several suggestions to it. The Executive referred the minister's report to the Treasurer who, not surprisingly, supported the former's recommendations. They were then adopted by the Executive and returned to the Council to be ratified as party policy.¹ Although the resolution originated in the organisation, neither the branch concerned nor the Executive nor Council could rightly claim to have 'made' the policy that was subsequently implemented. The minister's response was the decisive factor.

Yet it should not be thought that the Executive committees are the passive instruments of the ministers. The committees' personnel develop a sufficient expertise in specific areas of policy to constitute

¹SE, 12 April, 10 May 1957; SC, 28-9 August 1957.

a pressure which ministers cannot lightly ignore - and nor do they, as the reports to the Executive of a vigorous sub-committee like the Rural Committee clearly reveal.

The work of the sub-committees is thorough. Their reports may be lengthy and detailed, depending on the issue being examined. If necessary their members reach outside the party to obtain the opinions of appropriate interest groups, organisations and qualified experts. To give but one example: the Rural Committee reported that in studying facilities for agricultural education it had held meetings with the parliamentary committee on agricultural colleges, the advisory council through which the Education Department administers agricultural colleges, and with Professor Sir Samuel Wadham. As a result of these consultations the committee forwarded several recommendations to the state government.¹

The Council sometimes passes resolutions which the politicians object to. When this happens, despite the constitutional powers of the Council, the parliamentary party still has several stratagems at hand. The most useful one is the understanding that although the parliamentarians are obliged by the constitution to implement Council resolutions, the timing of action is left to the government on the grounds that there may be good and sufficient political reasons for slowing down the implementation of a policy, such as the threat of its defeat in a hostile Legislative Council or, as in the case of rent decontrol, the unpopular and hence impolitic nature of the measure were it fully introduced. Another ploy

¹SE, 6 December 1957.

resorted to by the parliamentary party is to embark on prolonged investigations into the issue in the hope that it will be forgotten or that the State Council will subsequently reverse its policy, as it did over the proposal for the appointment of an ombudsman. When this policy was adopted by a split decision, despite the opposition of parliamentarians, the press correctly predicted that:

The close vote [111:105] at the conference and Ministerial opposition make it unlikely that the present State Government will appoint an ombudsman in the foreseeable future.¹

The government took refuge in an investigation into administrative tribunals by the all-party Statute Law Revision Committee. This continued until parliament was dissolved for the state elections in 1964. It was then not reconvened. But the issue as far as activists were concerned was far from dead: the State Council in August 1964 again called for the appointment of an ombudsman.² More than a year later, in the absence of any action from the parliamentary party, the Executive gave it another prod, though a rather gentle one in the form of a resolution requesting the joint policy committee 'to seek expedition in the implementation of the Policy of the Party, twice endorsed by State Council, for the appointment of an Ombudsman in Victoria'.³

The State Council again took up the issue in February 1966 by approving branch resolutions calling for the government to appoint an

¹Age, 1 August 1963.

²SC, 26-7 August 1964.

³SE, 12 November 1965.

ombudsman 'immediately'.¹ The pressure was taken off the politicians for the time being, however, when the next Council rescinded the policy by 166 votes to 118.² An attempt to reverse this reversal failed in March 1967, and another branch resolution for the same purpose was omitted from the agenda of the July meeting; in February 1968 a similar resolution on the agenda lapsed for want of time.³ Aspects of the unresolved ombudsman case clearly show the limitations of the Council's and Executive's power, short of invoking sanctions against the politicians, to pressure the parliamentary party into action on a policy it resists: power and formal authority do not coincide within the party.

The government's refusal to act promptly on politically sensitive proposals is further illustrated by the issue of abortion law reform. In February 1968 the Council approved a resolution calling for legalised abortion in certain circumstances.⁴ Contentious though the matter was, there was no need to refer it to the Executive for further investigation, for the resolution had been submitted to the Council in the first place by the Executive, following a recommendation from its Law Reform Committee. The government was thus faced with a major item of party policy which it would have preferred to avoid, because of the contentious moral issues involved. In August, when three branches pressed for further action on the matter,⁵ the Deputy-Premier, Sir Arthur Rylah, predictably reminded

¹ SC, 23-4 February 1966.

² Age, 28 July 1966.

³ SC, 1-2 March, 26-7 July 1967; 28-9 February 1968.

⁴ Ibid., 28-9 February 1968.

⁵ Ibid., 31 July - 1 August 1968.

party members and the public generally that 'Council recommendations were regarded by the Government as policy, but the Government reserved the right to implement them when it saw fit'.¹ Earlier (and not on the eve of a Council meeting) the Premier had said bluntly that 'the Government would make its own decision in its own time on the issue',² and that it would 'not be pressured by anyone'.³

Nonetheless the government was under pressure: the Council has at least this much power. It may not be the principal source of Liberal state government policy, but it has sufficient constitutional status to be regarded as a factor in government when the party is in power. Furthermore, when it is convenient to do so, the politicians themselves invoke the authority of the Council to justify a stand on some issue. Thus Council resolutions affirming capital punishment strengthened the Premier's resolve to proceed with the hanging of the convicted murderer, Ronald Ryan, in 1967.⁴

Apart from policy resolutions concerned with non-partisan, commonsense matters of the kind referred to earlier, the Council's exercise of its policy-making authority has most impact on the actions

¹ Australian, 31 July 1968.

² Canberra Times, 2 July 1968.

³ Australian, 4 July 1968.

⁴ As one newspaper editorial observed sarcastically: 'At present the Victorian government's attitude towards Ryan has been justified only by reference to Liberal Party policy, which the Government itself has overturned in almost every other case' (Canberra Times, 19 December 1966).

of the parliamentary party in relation to issues with a moral content (such as abortion law reform) or referring to questions arousing wide public interest. On such matters especially it is politic for the parliamentarians to show respect for the Council's policy-making role. Thus, on the question of reform of the liquor laws, it was necessary for the Council to release the parliamentary party from the constraints of an existing policy before it was free to act on the recommendations submitted in 1965 by the Liquor Royal Commission. Until then the party's declared policy, ratified by the Council, was that there would be no change in hotel trading hours without a referendum.¹ However, it was pointed out to the Council in February 1965 that the Royal Commission, which had been appointed at the request of all state parliamentary parties, would make its report public before the next Council meeting. A branch resolution proposed that the existing policy be rescinded and that the Executive be authorised 'to take such action as it thinks fit in connection with the implementation of the Royal Commission's report'.² In the event the Council gave the government complete freedom (unhindered by the involvement of the Executive) by approving the motion in an abbreviated form: '...the State council resolves that the existing party policy on liquor reform be rescinded'.³ Bolte, magnanimous on this occasion, 'gave the council an undertaking that the parliamentary party

¹ Adopted February 1953, reaffirmed July 1963.

² Age, 13 February 1965.

³ Australian, 26 February 1965.

and the State executive would confer before any action to change liquor laws was taken'.¹ And it must be said that this is the style of consultative policy-making procedure that Liberal Party members welcome in preference to the articulation of quasi-directives by the Council or, as in the cases of the ombudsman and abortion law reform, a direct confrontation between the Council and the parliamentary party. The latter styles seem to resemble too much the mode of the A.L.P. for the comfort of most non-Labor activists.

ASSESSMENT

There is some reality in the Liberal Party's policy-making myths: to some extent the non-parliamentary organisation can and does make party policy, which the politicians implement. This was demonstrated in 1959 when a sub-committee consisting of five members of the Executive was appointed to examine the action that the state government had or had not taken on resolutions approved by the Council.² The enquiry took into account resolutions which had been passed at the six Council meetings held in 1956-8. It was confined to those proposals which stated a clear policy, and when resolutions calling for an investigation into some matter or asking the government merely to consider a certain action were excluded, thirty remained for the committee to investigate. Of these the

¹Ibid.

²The following details of the results of this enquiry are from SE, 3 July 1959, and Minority Report of State Council Resolutions Sub-Committee, July 1959.

investigating committee found that the government had taken appropriate action on twelve; five other resolutions required no action since they stated what was already law or government policy being implemented; on one, concerning parliamentarians' salaries, the government by raising salaries had taken the opposite action to that desired by the Council; on the remaining twelve no action appeared to have been taken.

Looking at the last group more closely, the committee agreed that in four cases the government's reasons for having taken no action were 'compelling', and that the Council should rescind these policies; on another matter, that of a car ferry across Port Phillip Bay, it was felt that the government had a legitimate discretion as to whether it should spend money on the project at that time. The committee concluded in effect that the parliamentary party's reputation hung on the remaining seven resolutions. These involved a characteristically mixed bag of policies: they called for the abolition of live-bird trap shooting, abolition of the Egg Marketing Board, changes in the system of life passes on the Victorian railways for former state parliamentarians, the establishment of a committee to consider fluoridation, the appointment of a board of enquiry to examine the Melbourne Board of Works rating system, amendments to the Landlord and Tenant Act, and the compulsory fitting of mud flaps on heavy motor vehicles.

At this point the members of the investigating committee were divided on the exact degree to which the government had been remiss in not implementing the Council's resolutions. The division resulted in part from the difficulty of determining what action might be considered adequate

in relation to resolutions which, with one exception, had been passed by the Council less than a year before the enquiry - leaving the government only a limited time to act on them; but even more it reflected the greater inclination of some activists than others to see virtue in the deeds of the parliamentary party. Thus three of the committee's five members contended that the only resolution which appeared not to have been 'given consideration' was that concerning railway passes. They considered that adequate preliminary moves at least had been made on the others¹ - a view which seems rather benign in the case of the resolution calling for the abolition of live-bird trap shooting, for this had been 'party policy' since the Council meeting in February 1956, and had been re-affirmed in August 1958. The Premier, however, himself a trap shooter, had stoutly opposed its abolition. In September 1958 the parliamentary party had reported to the Executive that the question was still under discussion by caucus, and the Executive in reply had passed a motion stating that in its opinion the government should initiate the appropriate legislation 'without delay'.² It was clearly a moot point as to whether the parliamentary party's record on this item was adequate. The other two members of the committee identified six resolutions which 'could have been acted upon by the Government but had not been'.³

As a result of the sub-committee's enquiry, the Executive referred all of the seven policy resolutions on which government action was

¹SE, 3 July 1959.

²Ibid., 12 September 1958.

³Minority Report.

incomplete to the joint policy committee.¹ Government action was subsequently taken on all of them with the exception of the abolition of the Egg Marketing Board. This policy, however, was rescinded by the Council in August 1959, on the recommendation of the Executive.²

The parliamentary party thus came out of the enquiry with its reputation unscarred and perhaps even enhanced - though its hand had certainly been forced on the anti-trap-shooting policy and possibly also on rail passes. On the basis of their enquiry, the majority of the sub-committee reported to the Executive that they had found the situation to be 'most heartening' and concluded that the party's constitution was 'being substantially adhered to by the Parliamentary wing'.³ And this was the conclusion conveyed to the State Council by the Executive in its report on the findings of the sub-committee.⁴ As the Agenda Committee of the State Executive recalled at a later date, when recommending a similar enquiry into the fate of Council resolutions, 'the record of implementation was high' and as a result of the investigation 'many doubts were resolved'.⁵ Few serious doubts have been raised since then. The majority of party members are content with the results of policy-making procedures that have evolved on the basis of a once assertive and still watchful organisation on the one hand, and a parliamentary wing well into its

¹SE, 24 July 1959.

²SC, 19-20 August 1959.

³SE, 3 July 1959.

⁴Ibid., 24 July 1959.

⁵Ibid., 4 June 1965. An Executive committee was set up for this purpose (ibid., 10 September, 12 November 1965) but it lapsed, according to one source, because it was 'in the hands of the wrong man' (confidential interview).

second decade of continuous office on the other. To most members the varied responses of the parliamentary party to Council's resolutions seem to be an adequate translation of the party's original organisational doctrine of 'due influence'.

In the early 1950s Louise Overacker remarked with reference to the internal relations of the Liberal Party that it had 'repudiated the tight oligarchical control characteristic of the United Australia party without finding a satisfactory substitute'. She speculated further as to whether in fact it would prove possible for the party to repudiate oligarchy 'without eventually accepting Labor's theory that parliamentarians and party officers alike are the servants of a movement'.¹ In Victoria the Liberal Party does appear to have found a 'satisfactory substitute' by combining an authoritative State Council (arrived at, as we have seen, in a pragmatic manner) with traditional non-Labor principles. Thus the party's constitution gives the organisation power to determine policy through the State Council and obliges the parliamentarians to act on it; the constitution also equips the organisation with adequate sanctions to enforce the compliance of politicians, if it cares to use them. But traditional rhetoric emphasises that only the A.L.P. 'dictates to' or 'instructs' its parliamentary representatives, thus weakening the force of the constitution.

¹The Australian Party System, p.270. It should be noted, however, that in the context of the passage quoted she was referring more to the federal structure than to any of the state parties.

The constitutional basis of the organisation's policy-making activity, like the conditions under which it evolved, is a distinctive feature of the Victorian Division. The importance of the constitution, however, should not be exaggerated: constitutions prescribe abstract powers and lay down frameworks for action, but they do not determine the nature of all that happens. As one analyst of political power has aptly said:

De jure power is the power prescribed by a system of rules. To attribute de jure power to an actor is not to say anything about what he can actually do; it is simply a statement about what the rules empower him to do.¹

The constitution is thus one factor among many influencing the party's policy-making activities. Despite the amendments introduced in 1953 and intended to strengthen the effectiveness of the organisation's role in determining party policy, the balance of policy-making power still favours the parliamentary party. Occupying the government benches continuously since 1955 has assured the parliamentary leadership of what Leon Epstein calls a 'working supremacy'.² From this perspective, very few, if any, of the party's branch members would wish to apply the provisions of the constitution strictly, for that would mean increasing the level of intra-party conflict and damaging Liberal's public image.

Yet while the significance of the constitution should not be exaggerated by a literal interpretation of its provisions, neither should

¹Anthony de Crespigny, 'Power and its Forms', Political Studies, Vol.XVI, No.2, June 1968, p.202, footnote 1.

²Political Parties in Western Democracies, p.308.

it be ignored. The organisation is a more effective 'conveyor-belt' of rank-and-file opinion as a result of it. With the constitution to support it the organisation can put more pressure on the government, and the government is more responsive to proposals than would be the case under a different set of rules and norms. Faced with a constitutionally authoritative State Council, parliamentarians must at least appear to take seriously the policy ideas expressed within that body and in good time do something about them -- or supply the organisation with convincing reasons why not. Thus, ministerial statements on policy resolutions being investigated by the State Executive are always fully argued. In policy-making activities the constitution contributes to a relationship in which politicians must repay with respect the deference that they are willingly accorded by most activists.

At the same time the organisation has also had to take its policy-making activities seriously and develop procedures which are consistent with the constitutional importance of its role. In 1959, for example, on the basis of its enquiry into the implementation of Council resolutions, the Executive improved the organisation's channels of communication and methods of reporting the action taken on resolutions. The investigating committee had found 'that when a Resolution was carried by this Council the Branch concerned may hear no more of it',¹ and this contributed to the feeling that the parliamentarians were ignoring rank-and-file demands. Since then all resolutions approved by the Council have been communicated

¹SE, 24 July 1959.

to the parliamentary leader. Any statement from him concerning action taken on a resolution is then forwarded to the branch which sponsored it. Similarly, all ministerial or committee reports on resolutions referred to the State Executive or the federal organisation are communicated in full to the branch concerned. It is important for the continued participation of rank-and-file members in policy-making activity and for the credibility of the party's myth about their policy-making role, that branches should feel that their ideas have been taken seriously into account - the more so when only a small proportion of branch resolutions enquired into by the Executive's sub-committees is approved by them.

Since 1953, when the constitution clearly stipulated that resolutions passed by the State Council carried the status of party policy, the Executive has played a central part in policy-making activities, underpinning with its expertise the Council's authority. The work of the Executive sub-committees is essential to the organisation's claim to an authoritative policy-making role through the State Council. Yet in every respect the sub-committees function in accordance with traditional Liberal Party principles: they provide an opportunity for developing a closer liaison between activists and politicians and, although their members tend to defer to ministerial persuasion, through them the organisation is able to realise its purpose of exercising 'due influence' on the formulation of party policy. Much of the potential conflict between the parliamentary and non-parliamentary sections of the party, resulting from their sharing of the policy-making function, is dissipated within the sub-committees.

In the sub-committees, moreover, members of the Executive (who are usually among the most policy-orientated activists in the party) are

able to participate in policy-making at an influential and rewarding level. The evident satisfaction of these activists with their role in the formulation of party policy is a significant factor in contributing to the absence of conflict in the party.

The federal structure of the Liberal Party has enabled the Victorian Division to evolve a constitution which lays down provisions for policy-making quite different from those in either the original state constitution or the current federal constitution. The Federal Council and Executive are weak bodies in relation to the federal parliamentary party compared with their Victorian state counterparts.¹ Far more than at state level, traditional non-Labor doctrines of organisation dominate relations between the wings of the party; there has been no attempt among party members to suggest that the Federal Council should 'determine' party policy in the manner of the Victorian Council, or that federal parliamentarians 'ought' to implement its policy resolutions.²

Differences in the content of federal and state politics help to explain the development of these structural contrasts between the Victorian and the federal Liberal organisations. State politics is consumer politics: its 'bread and butter' issues affect people's daily lives in ways which are often more comprehensible to them than national issues. If

¹Cf. D.W. Rawson, *Federalism and the Party System*, Canberra, n.d., p.16 (mimeo).

²E.g., see opening comments by the federal president of the Liberal Party of Australia to 22nd Annual Meeting of the Federal Council, cited in Overacker, *Australian Parties in a changing society*, p.194; also S.M.H., 8 April 1964.

intra-party conflict over policy matters brings to a head (as it did in Victoria) the question of the relations between the wings of the party, there is little or nothing in the content of state politics to detract from any claim by activists that they have a right to determine what is to be party policy. Certainly activists are likely to feel that they have a just claim to determine policies in more areas of state than federal politics. Others have observed that the federal structure of parties tends to insulate their federal politicians from pressure from their organisations,¹ but the reverse - that federalism leaves state parliamentarians exposed to such pressure - though equally true, has not been emphasised. Furthermore, because it is a small, closely-knit and socially homogeneous structure,² whose members recruit their parliamentarians from amongst themselves, the Victorian Liberal Party is all the more likely to function as an effective 'mechanism for applying pressure to members of parliament'.

Largely because of the nature of Victorian politics between 1945 and 1955, the Victorian Liberal Party has developed these structural potentialities further than other state Divisions. Victorian Liberal politicians thus dominate the organisation less than their colleagues in the other state parties. As Duverger has shown, the dominance of parliamentarians over their party organisations varies over a wide range with

¹E.g. Rawson, Labor in Vain?, p.38; A.F. Davies, Australian Democracy, p.142.

²Unlike the British Conservative Party. See Samuel H. Beer, Modern British Politics. A Study of Parties and Pressure Groups, London, 1965, p.383.

socialist and labour parties exercising greater control over their politicians than conservative or non-labour parties.¹ On such a scale the Victorian Liberal Party lies well to the 'left' of the British Conservatives and somewhat to the 'left' of its own federal party. It is impossible to say of Victorian Liberals, as McKenzie does of the British Conservative Party, that the autonomy of the parliamentary party 'is almost completely unimpaired'.² For the Liberal Party's 'system of consultation with its mass organization' involves its state parliamentarians in a clearly-stated constitutional obligation to the rank-and-file membership. Policy-making procedures in practice are greatly influenced by this fact.

¹Duverger, Political Parties, pp.182-202.

²McKenzie, British Political Parties, p.648.

CHAPTER 14

CONCLUSION

Major political parties are not usually as disdainful of their own organisational heritage as is the Liberal Party, which looks back at its non-Labor past mainly to dissociate itself from it. There is good reason for this. Well before moves to form a new party were generated by the overwhelming defeat of the federal U.A.P. in the 1943 elections, many people were convinced that the electoral organisation of the U.A.P. was ineffective, and that its oligarchical tendencies, especially the activities of the National Union, were wrong in principle. Vilification of the U.A.P.'s organisation by the press as well as by the party's own members in and out of parliament helped to discredit the party. Not for the first time in the history of the parties, Labor's organisation seemed to be more vigorous and democratic than non-Labor's. The Liberal Party, therefore, was constituted in a mood of reaction against the U.A.P. Those concerned with the formation of the new party wanted not merely to create a more active non-parliamentary organisation, but one based on structures and procedures which more patently conformed to widely-accepted notions of what a mass party should be like. They wanted an organisation with a reputable public image. In this respect the transition from U.A.P. to Liberal bears out Duverger's contention that parties in a democratic political culture are constrained to adopt organisational forms which they can portray as democratic 'in accordance with the political doctrines

of the period'.¹

Despite such evident strands of continuity between the U.A.P. and the Liberal Party as their role in the party system, the distribution of their electoral support and their main sources of finance, in its organisation the Liberal Party marks a significant break from the past. Moreover, by any yardstick, and most of all according to criteria valued by party members themselves, the Liberal phase of non-Labor organisation has been by far the most successful. Success in this case is measured by election results and, with only one notable lapse in Victoria in the years 1950-52, by an absence of serious conflict within the party.

While there is no clear correlation between local party organisation and election results, one must suppose, as do the branch members, that effective organisation has contributed to the party's success in winning office. Certainly, on the basis of its substantial and fairly stable mass organisation, the Liberal Party is materially better equipped to contest elections than was the U.A.P. Membership fees and donations have greatly strengthened the Liberal Party's electoral funds, and its more extensive branch structure provides it with a reliable, easily-mobilised work force. The activities of its branches and even more of its auxiliary groups contribute to the impression that the Liberal Party is a larger, more continuously active body than the U.A.P.

In another and more fundamental respect the Liberal Party has established an identity distinguishable from that of the U.A.P. Perhaps

¹Political Parties, p.26.

the most harmful accusation to be frequently levelled at the latter was that it was run by and for 'big business'. This referred in particular to the more or less clandestine activities of the self-appointed group of prominent businessmen comprising the National Union. By replacing this body with a party-appointed Finance Committee, the Liberal Party deprived such non-elective groups of an obvious means of asserting pressure from within the organisation, placed the party on a more reputable organisational basis, and removed a source of intra-party contention. There is, of course, still a sense in which the Liberal Party, like its predecessor, is associated with 'big business'. Business interests prefer non-Labor to Labor governments and provide funds necessary to maintain the Liberal Party's organisation, while individual businessmen are deeply involved as members of the party in its activities. But the sense in which the Liberal Party is a businessmen's party is compatible with democratic principles of organisation in a way that the existence of the National Union was not. Thus, in the Liberal Party, there is no institutionalised centre of power - certainly not the Finance Committee - which is monopolised by businessmen and is comparable with the defunct National Union. Party members find no occasion, for example, to refer to certain candidates for pre-selection as 'nominees' of the Finance Committee, as U.A.P. members sometimes spoke of candidates supported by the National Union; nor do Liberal parliamentary leaders react angrily to pressures from the Finance Committee, as did Hollway to those of the National Union. At the very least one can say that nothing in the Liberal Party's non-parliamentary organisation has detracted from its public image to the same extent as did

the National Union in the U.A.P.

The Liberal Party has been more successful than its predecessors from another point of view. It has afforded branch members with (if they desire it) a fuller and more rewarding role in party affairs, especially the important activity of formulating policy. During the Nationalist and U.A.P. periods of non-Labor organisation, non-parliamentary members played a negligible part in the determination of party policy. The subordinate place of the rank-and-file was sanctioned by the traditional non-Labor doctrine that politicians should not be bound to policies laid down by non-parliamentary bodies. Acceptance of this doctrine by the Liberal Party also has conditioned its rank-and-file members to accept a more limited policy-making role than that claimed by many, though certainly not all, of their Labor counterparts. Nonetheless, the formation of a party which emphasised membership participation and democratic forms of organisation, and whose activists were often persons who had been dissatisfied with the functioning of the U.A.P., soon led to a demand that non-parliamentary members should exercise, through the party's central organs, a greater influence than in the past on the actions of the politicians. At times Liberal activists came near to espousing the Labor doctrine of the sovereignty of party membership. But their object was always a reasonably responsive parliamentary party, not a subservient one. To discipline the parliamentarians into compliance over policy issues by, for example, threatening to withhold their endorsement, as the State Executive has power to do, would be to give the game away to the Labor Party. Liberals prefer to uphold their non-Labor identity.

On most counts, then, the Victorian Liberal Party has very largely achieved the objectives of those who formed it. Admittedly it has failed to overcome the ubiquitous problem faced by mass parties of political apathy among its clientele, in this case the non-Labor voters. Consequently, aspects of the party's organisation have consistently fallen below the expectations of some of the more enthusiastic and loyal activists. On the other hand, the party functions as a more closely integrated structure than did the U.A.P. and it has reached a comparatively stable modus vivendi between its parliamentary and non-parliamentary wings. Generally, the branch members feel that they can play an effective role in party affairs; notions of intra-party democracy are well to the front of their perceptions of the party; policy-making procedures and channels of communication within the organisation are such that politicians, if not always as responsive as some would like, are at least in touch with and attentive to the views of the rank-and-file members. Long periods of office at both levels of government have helped to maintain the ascendancy of the parliamentarians in the party, but only on the basis of a continuing dialogue between rank-and-file and politicians.

Why has the Liberal Party been able to maintain a larger, more active, more integrated organisation than either the Nationalists or the U.A.P.? An explanation of the scale and permanence of Liberal organisation is to be found not so much in the attitudes of electors towards participation in political parties, as in continuous organising activity by the party. The party maintains itself in its present form only by such means as periodic membership drives by suburban branches, the employment of

permanent organisers in country electorates, and the encouragement of auxiliary organisations.

Political expediency is undoubtedly the main motive for this activity. Liberals conclude from the example of the U.A.P. that the price of allowing their organisation to decay will be disastrous electoral decline. But the formation of the Liberal Party is associated also with a strengthening of the normative basis of organisation. A large and preferably active membership is sought not merely because it provides the party with an electoral machine, but because it is consistent with its claim to be a democratic mass party representing all sections of the community. To recall Duverger's words again, the Liberal Party pursues organisational forms which accord 'with the political doctrines of the period'.

Effective organisation depends to a large extent on the activity of a relatively small number of party members whose interest in politics and commitment to the party often stem from or grow into an ambition for a parliamentary career. Political ambition, in short, is a major stimulus of party organisation, the strength of the stimulus being determined by the extent that party activity counts as a criterion in the selection of parliamentary candidates. A member having an eye to pre-selection generally puts more time into his party activities than most other members, and the organisation benefits accordingly. Moreover, several factors have helped to maintain within the Liberal organisation a high incidence of political careerism of this kind. In the first place the party's success in winning seats nurtures parliamentary ambitions in members. This is the

antithesis of the recruitment problem commonly experienced by minority parties, like the British Liberal Party, which often have difficulty finding a sufficient number of persons prepared to act as parliamentary candidates.¹ In the Victorian Liberal Party, competition for pre-selection in favourable seats is considerable and the decentralised selection procedure tends to maximise the importance of a sound if not necessarily spectacular record of party activity. Secondly, the membership of the Liberal Party draws heavily from occupational groups, such as lawyers, businessmen and graziers who, in Australia, traditionally provide a disproportionate number of parliamentarians.

The extra-parliamentary sections of the Liberal Party's forerunners also performed a recruitment function. In this respect the main difference between the U.A.P. and the Liberal Party is structural. The Liberal Party is an integrated organisation; the former was divided. In the U.A.P., most resourceful and ambitious activists tended to join the Young Nationalists, while the U.A.O., which purported to be the main organisational component of the U.A.P., languished.

If effective organisation has contributed to the party's electoral success, the latter in turn helps to sustain the organisation. Despite the fear expressed by some activists that prolonged success leads to apathy among members, the extent to which the party has achieved its goal of governing at both state and federal levels has benefited its organisation. Winning elections, especially when this is the main function of

¹E.g., see Jorgen Scott Rasmussen, The Liberal Party: A Study of Retrenchment and Revival, London, 1965, p.209; Austin Ranney, Pathways to Parliament: Candidate Selection in Britain, London, 1965, p.251.

organisation, helps to maintain the morale of members, while defeat, though it may stimulate greater activity within some branches, also creates tensions and recriminations. The large degree of continuity in the party's state and federal parliamentary leadership during most of the period, as well as its long tenure in office, go far to explain the absence of any serious intra-party conflict for more than fifteen years. This, party members believe, is further evidence that the party is functioning successfully.

Consensus, common interest and the reconciliation of conflict are fundamental Liberal goals. The party pursues them within its own organisation as well as in the community. Liberals typically regard discord within the party as harmful of its public image and so detrimental to the attainment of its primary objective of winning elections. Thus, in an address to the Victorian State Executive, J.E. Pagan, federal president (1965-), observed that:

Our image is that of a coherent, cohesive Party and our greatest task is to maintain the projection of that image... If the public sees us displaying discord, championing one section of thought against another, it will judge us accordingly. The seeds of defeat in politics... have their genesis in a Party.¹

For confirmation of this view, the Liberals claim, they need only point to the example of the A.L.P. and to their own electorally disastrous split in Victoria in 1952.

The harmonious organisation so desired by Liberal members appears on the surface to be more attainable in the Liberal Party than the A.L.P.

¹SE, 3 February 1967.

Whilst Liberals are strongly averse to discord, Labor Party members are more inclined to regard conflict as a normal part of social and political life. Even within their party they are accustomed to clashes of interest between such elements of the organisation as the rank-and-file members, union officials and politicians. There are fewer causes of dissension within the Liberal Party. In the first place, there is no conflict of roles between winning parliamentary seats and propounding public policies, as there is at times in the A.L.P.¹ The Liberal Party has no pretensions to radicalism; its temper is moderate. Questions concerning the content of party policy and the place of the politicians in the party are therefore not as prominent in its internal politics as in Labor's. For the most part the Liberal branch members trust their parliamentary representatives to propound acceptable policies and they accept a more self-denying role in shaping policy than their Labor counterparts. Sections of the rank-and-file membership have sometimes been temporarily disillusioned by the actions of their parliamentary representatives on isolated policy issues. But such a response has not been intensified, as it is likely to be in the A.L.P., by fundamental ideological differences among members, or by considerations of organisational doctrine, for the Liberal Party's membership is socially and ideologically more homogeneous than Labor's. There is, for example, no divergence of

¹E.g., as evidenced in the following view expressed by F.E. Chamberlain, at various times general secretary of Labor's W.A. Branch, and federal president and federal secretary of the A.L.P.: 'This movement must resist with all the strength it can muster, the tendency in certain quarters to measure our progress solely in terms of parliamentary seats' (A Selection of Talks and Articles by F.E. Chamberlain on Australian Labor Party Principles, A.L.P., W.A. Branch, 1965).

interest between middle and working-class members as is reputedly found in the A.L.P.¹

However, consensus and cohesion within a party are never more than relative and not necessarily permanent traits. Thus some Liberal members have already voiced the fear that the party risks serious dissension over the question of Commonwealth-state relations. Others warn of the activities of 'rightist' groups within the organisation, involving in particular, but not solely, non-British migrants. Although Liberals may dislike and even fear the prospect of greater debate and perhaps dissension within the party's organisation, such a contingency appears inescapable from time to time, given the unpredictable nature of the course of both federal and state politics. Indeed, it could be regarded in part as a normal consequence of the party's having developed a substantial mass organisation capable of harbouring significant political discord.

The structure and functioning of the Liberal Party's institutions are shaped by three general factors which influence the organisation of all Australian parties. These factors are: the electoral system and the values inherent in it; the social and sectional structure of the electorate; and the idiosyncratic nature of political participation.

To the extent that party organisations are geared to contesting

¹E.g., see D.W. Rawson, *The Organisation of the Australian Labor Party* pp.385-6; also his *Labor in Vain?* p.13.

elections, the electoral system and the conventions of electioneering impose certain uniformities on them. Thus the Liberal Party's formal structure, like that of other major parties, is designed in the first place to meet its practical electoral needs. It is desirable, for example, not only that the party should build up a membership, but that members should be organised into branches and other functional groups dispersed throughout the various electorates as a basis on which to organise election campaigns.

As well as considerations of electoral expediency, the observance of organisational principles is important in shaping the party's structure - though, as doubtless in all parties, such principles are leavened with pragmatism. To take only one example, the Liberal Party provides for selection of parliamentary candidates by means of electorate conventions, not merely because this is an effective practical way of performing the activity, but also because it is recognised as an acceptable method of doing so: it accords sufficiently with the broad canons of democratic procedure that are immanent in the electoral system, and with what is regarded as an appropriate function of branches in a parliamentary system based on single-member constituencies. Other procedures, such as the selection of candidates by ballot of the rank-and-file members, might appear even more democratic, but the existing method has been found to operate with a minimum of dissension, and this, it has been suggested, is itself a valued organisational attribute.

Social structure is another major determinant of the Liberal Party's organisation. In metropolitan electorates, the party is most

effectively organised in upper-middle-class areas - where its voting support is greatest and where, for electoral purposes, it least needs a vigorous local organisation. Labor's branches by contrast are more evenly distributed among middle and working-class electorates. This is not a reflection of a more uniform class distribution of Labor voters and hence of potential members. On the contrary, there is some evidence that Liberal voters are more evenly distributed across the occupational-social spectrum than Labor's.¹ Rather it is indicative of the greater rate of political participation among middle than working-class persons.² As a result, the A.L.P. has more and stronger branches in middle-class suburbs than the Liberal Party has in Labor-held, working-class electorates.

The third general factor in influencing the party's structure is the highly individual basis of political participation. The membership of any party comprises a diverse group. People vary widely as to their political talents, their interest in party affairs and their motives for taking part in them. The most involved and the more resourceful activists, it has been suggested, are often those who are ambitious for a parliamentary career. Variations in personal styles of activism are carried over into the local units of organisation which, as a consequence, are also highly differentiated. Branches, for example, are active or inactive,

¹ See Peter Aimer, 'The Liberal Parties', in Australian Politics: a second reader, ed. Mayer, p.301.

² A recent reference to this factor in Australian party politics is in Paul R. Wilson and J.S. Western, 'Participation in Politics', Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology, Vol.5, No.2, October 1969, pp.105, 109.

policy-oriented or not according to the influence of the persons running them. Within this pattern of diversity, however, a broad country-suburban division is evident in the party's electorate organisation. The distinction is comparable to that aptly described by Sorauf (with reference to the parties in Pennsylvania) as 'the maximum parties of the cities and the minimum parties of the rural areas'.¹ Thus, because of geographic and demographic factors and also because country members view participation in party politics differently from many of their middle-class suburban confrères, Liberal country branches were seen to be less active as a rule than those in the suburbs.

Generalisations about the Liberal Party's extra-parliamentary organisation have often conveyed a too restricted and negative view of its functions. They have referred to its inactive branches, but have given less prominence to the role of a minority of active ones; they have minimised the influence of the policy-making activities of the rank-and-file, and they have emphasised the electoral function of the organisation while largely ignoring its highly developed recruitment function. Yet activities and attitudes relating to the latter permeate all of the party's institutions, for the qualifications for winning selection come from inside the party as well as from the outside community: organisational 'notables' win selection as well as social 'notables'.

¹Party and Representation, p.149.

Admittedly, the Liberal Party's electoral success throws a perhaps too-favourable light on its organisation. Yet compared with its non-Labor predecessors its ability to maintain a stable mass organisation is a striking achievement. Far from being a source of organisational weakness, as Duverger's strictures on middle-class parties might have led one to believe, the middle-class social composition of the Liberal Party has been its main financial and organisational asset. Structurally the Liberal Party does not fit easily into either of Duverger's cadre or mass categories of political parties - which in any case he regarded as tendencies rather than types. Various elements of the party's political and social environment act on it (and the other parties) in different ways. Thus the prevalence of middle rather than working-class life styles, a pragmatic rather than ideological approach to political issues, the financial backing of private enterprise interest groups, and an electorate that is largely indifferent to involvement in political activity pull towards the cadre model of party organisation, while the presence of a strong class-based Labor Party and the high value placed on democratic organisational forms push in the direction of the mass party.

Like other parties, the Liberal Party is subject to oligarchic tendencies. But the factor of oligarchy is modified by the party's small size and the relative absence in Australian society of a clearly-recognised social and political elite of the kind that structures the British parties. One cannot say for the Liberal Party's electorate organisation, with the same force as for those of the British Labour Party, that 'values such as civility, loyalty, forbearance and obligation impose substantial limits on

the political factor in constituency decision making'.¹ Compared with the British Conservative Party, with its powerful Central Office and with over twice as many enrolled members as Victoria has voters, the Liberal Party is a small-scale organisation. As R.S. Milne has suggested with reference to parties in N.Z., such 'face-to-face' structures may 'avoid some of the oligarchic tendencies which exist in larger organisations in bigger countries'.²

As a structure then, the Victorian Liberal Party is a small, relatively close-knit, middle-class mass party, with a minimum of social distance between the parliamentary and non-parliamentary membership, but a distribution of power that, given the traditions of the party and the imperatives of the parliamentary system, normally favours the politicians.

¹Janosik, Constituency Labour Parties in Britain, p.104.

²Political Parties in New Zealand, Oxford, 1966, pp.2-3.

APPENDIX A

A NOTE ON STATE COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS

Branch policy resolutions forwarded to the Council can be divided into two categories -- 'demands' and 'supports'. 'Support' resolutions typically commend the state or federal government (or the parliamentary party, when the Liberals are in opposition) for measures already taken or about to be taken, or they re-affirm an existing Liberal policy or principle. 'Demand' resolutions comprise by far the larger group. Typically such resolutions call for governmental action on some matter. They either make specific demands :

That the Education Department take over administration of kindergartens from the Health Department...

or they indicate an area where an anomaly is considered to exist and request the government to investigate it 'with a view to appropriate action'. Other 'demand' resolutions state a specific action which is thought to be desirable, but leave the decision to the government (a style which the parliamentarians favour) :

That this State Council requests the State Government to investigate the possibility of giving a subsidy to the individual spastic children's centres.

Content¹

Branch activists are more often concerned with state than federal politics: 57 per cent of the resolutions analysed referred to state matters compared with 34 per cent federal. The remaining 9 per cent of resolutions were concerned with party organisation. The preponderance of state-level resolutions is contrary to K. Holgate's assertion regarding the N.S.W. Division:

Despite the popular misconception that rank and file party members are primarily concerned with state and local questions, State Councillors have devoted quite as much time to the discussion of federal as to the discussion of state issues.²

The disagreement may perhaps be explained by the fact that the N.S.W. and Victorian State Councils are not equivalent bodies. The Victorian Council functions as a conference at which all branches are directly represented and to which they may send resolutions. The composition and place of the N.S.W. Council is quite different; it is made up mainly of delegates from the state electorate conferences, the youths' and women's groups, the state finance committee and the parliamentary parties; branches are

¹The following analysis is based on resolutions recorded in the State Council minutes for the decade from August 1957 to March 1967. Many resolutions on the agendas of meetings in this period were not discussed owing to lack of time and thus were not recorded in the minutes. Until 1961 resolutions which were 'lost' at the Council's meetings were not recorded. Resolutions concerned with amendments to the party constitution, and those submitted by the Executive are also excluded from the analysis.

²Katharine Holgate (West), *The Structure of Liberal State Politics in N.S.W.*, p.20.

only indirectly represented by fifteen members elected by the State Convention. The bulk of branch policy resolutions considered by the N.S.W. Council have been channelled through the electorate conferences and State Convention. The N.S.W. Council is far less a popular forum than the Victorian body.

Another possible reason for the difference in the balance of branch resolutions between N.S.W. and Victoria is that the Victorian state party was continuously in government during the period under consideration, while the N.S.W. party was in opposition. The force of this explanation, however, is weakened insofar as a bias towards state politics is still evident in Victoria between 1952 and 1955 when the state Liberal Party, like its N.S.W. counterpart, was out of office. A greater concern (in a quantitative sense at least) with state politics appears to be inherent in the federal system: state issues are closer to the daily lives of people.

As in N.S.W., however, the largest single group of resolutions in Victoria relate to party organisation.¹ Apart from this, as one would expect, branch resolutions range over an incredible variety of subjects. In this respect, Liberal branch resolutions cover a much greater diversity of issues than those of the more narrowly sectional Country Party.² The table below summarises the distribution of branch resolutions according to categories of subject matter.

¹Holgate, p.20; cf. Aitkin, Organisation of the Country Party, p.249.

²See Aitkin, p.249.

Federal and state resolutions are combined in the percentages given in this table. Because of the difficulty of classifying some resolutions, the percentages should be regarded as only approximate.

TABLE

PERCENTAGE OF BRANCH RESOLUTIONS IN DIFFERENT CATEGORIES

<u>% of total</u>	<u>Categories</u>
9.2	<u>Party Organisation</u>
8.0 (F)	<u>Taxation</u> - probate, estate and gift duty, sales tax.
7.7	<u>Education</u>
6.6 (F/S)	<u>Electoral</u> - political, parliamentary salaries, how-to-vote cards, etc.
5.5	<u>Motor Vehicles</u> - registration, insurance, road accidents, safety and burglar devices, level and pedestrian crossings, traffic code.
5.1 (F)	<u>Social Services</u> - pensions, medical/hospital benefits, national insurance, child endowment.
5.1	<u>Health</u> - food handling, home safety, firearms regulations, anti-litter, hospitals, anti-noise, air pollution, fluoridation.
4.9	<u>Consumer Interests</u> - hire purchase regulations, protection of consumers, trading hours, bread baking hours, liquor reform, censorship.
4.6	<u>Transport</u> - roads, rails, freight, fares, freeways, underground railway, fare concessions.
4.0 (F)	<u>Defence</u> - military service, civil defence, C.M.F.
3.8	<u>Local Body</u> - property rights, valuations, rating systems, provisions of Local Government Acts.
2.6	<u>Crime</u> - punishment, moral issues.
2.4 (F)	<u>Trade & Economic Development</u> -- national development, productivity, tariffs, encourage industries, develop resources, marketing, national shipping line.

TABLE (cont.)

<u>%</u> <u>of total</u>	<u>Categories</u>
2.3	<u>Community Services</u> - electricity and water services and charges, water supply, telephone service and rentals, T.V./radio licences.
2.2 (F)	<u>Foreign Affairs</u> - overseas aid, Papua and New Guinea.
1.8	<u>Conservation</u> - preservation of natural resources/scenery/historic buildings, timber milling in water sheds, slaughter of kangaroos/wombats.
1.6 (F)	<u>Industrial</u> - arbitration/conciliation, strikes, wages and wage fixation, management and labour relations, industrial safety, automation.
1.3	<u>Housing</u> - slum clearance, home ownership, house finance, Housing Commission activities.
1.2	<u>Juveniles</u> - social problems, youth work, orphans, handicapped children, adoption, baby health centres.
20.1	<u>Other</u>
100.0	TOTAL

(N = 823) (F) = mainly federal resolutions;
(F/S) = federal/state resolutions evenly divided.

Separating state from federal resolutions changes the rank order of categories as shown above. Thus the first six categories in state politics are: 'education', 'motor vehicles', 'health', 'transport', 'local body', 'consumer interests', while in federal politics the 'taxation' and 'social services' categories together account for nearly half the federal resolutions (44 per cent).

The high rank order of the 'electoral' category indicates the interest typically shown by branch activists in the mechanics

of the political system - electoral boundaries, hours of polling, how-to-vote cards; but it is also boosted by a spate of resolutions in 1958-9 on the contentious issue of increased parliamentary salaries.

As the predominantly state categories show, the policy interests of Victorian Liberal activists are directed overwhelmingly towards adjusting and regulating their complex metropolitan environment. It is pragmatic, consumer politics, chiefly concerned with the individual in a mass, mechanised community. Two other categories - 'taxation' and 'local bodies' - reflect a characteristically middle-class concern with property rights and its persistence and ingenuity in suggesting tax deductions and concessional allowances.

Like their British party counterparts, Liberal branch activists are neither extremists nor ideologues, and their resolutions similarly are often of a non-partisan character.¹ In the latter regard it is noteworthy that the 'four areas of public concern - education, welfare services, transport, and pensions' which Rose cites as producing the fewest partisan resolutions,² are also prominent among the Victorian Liberal Party's categories.

Comparing the distribution of resolutions during the whole Liberal period from 1945 to 1967 with that of the last ten years,

¹See Richard Rose, 'The Political Ideas of English Party Activists', in Studies in British Politics, ed. Richard Rose, London, 1967, pp.285-307; M.P. Kochman, 'Liberal Party Activists and Extremism', Political Studies, Vol. XVI, June 1968, pp.253-7.

²Rose, p.298.

several trends are detectable. The chief of these is the increased incidence in recent years of resolutions on matters of defence, largely as a result of political events in South East Asia. The category 'foreign affairs', containing resolutions on foreign aid and Papua and New Guinea, has also shown a latter-day increase - though less marked than that of defence. Resolutions dealing with immigration have declined in number as anxiety during the early 1950s over the large influx of south European migrants waned. But the main categories of consumer politics have attracted steady interest throughout the postwar period.

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The community abounds with organised groups, many of which engage in political activity at some time or another. Accordingly it is of interest to see to what extent groups have channelled their views and demands through the party's extra-parliamentary organisation. The findings were largely negative: between 1950 and 1965 there were only thirty-three instances of groups communicating formally with the party through the general secretary and State Executive.¹ Civic

¹The groups concerned were: Victorian Wheat and Woolgrowers' Ass.; Australian Industries Development Ass.; Victorian Jewish Public Relations Bureau; Building Industry Congress; Independent Quarry Masters Ass. of Victoria; Road Contractors Ass. of Victoria; Waterside Workers' Federation; Aborigines Advancement League (2); Australian Medical Ass.; Victorian Trainers Ass.; Howard Reform League; Electrical and Radio Federation; Combined Pensioners' Ass.; Victorian Massage and Physiotherapy Ass.; Parents and Friends Ass. of Victoria (2); Industrial Adhesives Pty. Ltd.;

(cont.)

associations of various kinds and church groups accounted for nearly all cases, while major economic pressure groups were notably indifferent to this procedure. No group, with the exception perhaps of the Police Association (four instances), makes a regular practice of communicating with the party in this way.

The Executive has treated communications from groups according to the 'respectability' of the source and the nature of the demand. Not surprisingly, for example, a request from the Water-side Workers' Federation for permission for its representatives to address Liberal branches was 'not received'.¹ In the majority of cases the correspondence was received, the views of the group noted, and either no further action taken or the general secretary was asked to draft a suitable reply. In seven instances, however, the views of the group concerned were passed on to an appropriate Executive sub-committee or the joint policy committee. In one case (concerning the allocation of loan moneys to municipalities for road construction) the Executive recorded its support for the submission and forwarded it to the federal president. On another occasion, representatives from the Australian Medical Association were invited to address the Executive; and in one further case the

Police Ass. (4); Anti-hanging Committee; Towards Equal Citizenship for Aborigines Victorian Campaign Committee; Victorian Teachers' Union; Temperance Committee of Presbyterian Church; Church of England Social Questions Committee (2); Methodist Church of Australasia, Glen Iris Circuit; Traralgon Inter-Church Council; Council of Defence of Australia; Safer Democracy Group of Sydney; Freedom to Read Ass.

¹SE, 16 December 1955.

Premier, state president and general secretary agreed to receive a deputation from the Parents and Friends Association of Victoria. All this, it must be concluded, represents a very insignificant amount of activity for a period of fifteen years.

APPENDIX B

EXTRACTS FROM THE CONSTITUTION OF THE NEW AUSTRALIAN MOVEMENT 1951¹

Name : 'The New Australians' Liberal and Country Movement'.

'...it shall be an organ of the Liberal and Country Party' subject to the State Council.

Objects : 'To assist New Australians to become happy and effective citizens of their new country:

- (a) by promoting friendship between them and Australians generally;
- (b) by providing guidance in all aspects of Australian life and helping them in difficulties arising from their strange surroundings;
- (c) by promoting the general welfare of New Australians and protecting their interests.

To educate New Australians in the manner by which the Australian democracy is maintained on the principles of:

- (a) Parliament controlling the Executive and the law controlling all;
- (b) freedom of speech, religion and association;
- (c) freedom of citizens to choose their own way of living and of life, subject to the rights of others;
- (d) protection of the people against exploitation;
- (e) the encouragement of individual initiative and enterprise as the dynamic force of national progress.

¹Filed in Minutes of State Executive, March 1949 - Nov. 1951.

To enable those who believe in free democracy and all it means to become acquainted with the work and policies of the Australian Liberal Party...as the [L.P.] in Australia is the only effective political opponent of Communism and other forms of totalitarianism.

Membership : 'Any person having migrated to Australia with the intention of becoming an Australian citizen who is in sympathy with the objects of the Movement shall be eligible for ordinary membership provided that he or she

- (a) is not a British subject.
- (b) would be eligible in the course of time for nationalisation...
- (c) is not less than 21.'

Provision was made for junior members between the ages of 17 and 21.

No person was to be entitled to membership after ten years from the date of his entry to Australia, or after becoming entitled to vote at Commonwealth elections, whichever came first.

Liberal Party members were to be eligible to join the movement as honorary members.

Membership fee - two shillings and sixpence.

Branches : not less than twenty members. Each branch to elect two representatives to the Movement Council.

Council : (a) two representatives from each branch;
(b) the president of the Liberal Party or his deputy;

(c) four members of the Liberal Party appointed by the State Executive;

Council to elect (a) a president of the movement;

(b) two vice-presidents;

(c) four Executive members.

Council to be convened twice yearly.

Movement Executive : Composition : (a) Movement president, vice-presidents and four members elected by Council;

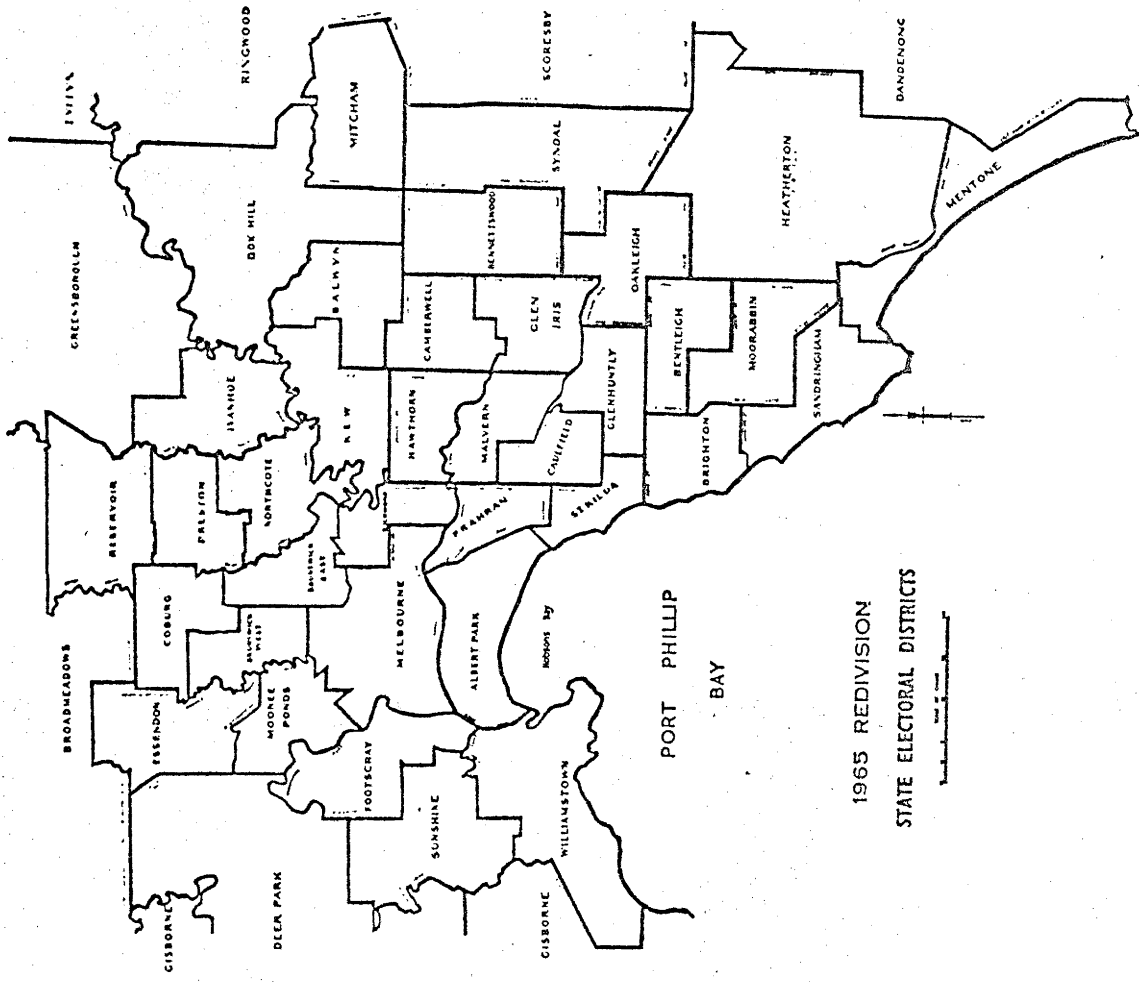
(b) president of the Liberal Party or his deputy;

(c) three members of the Liberal Party;

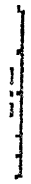
(d) a liaison officer appointed by the Liberal State Executive.

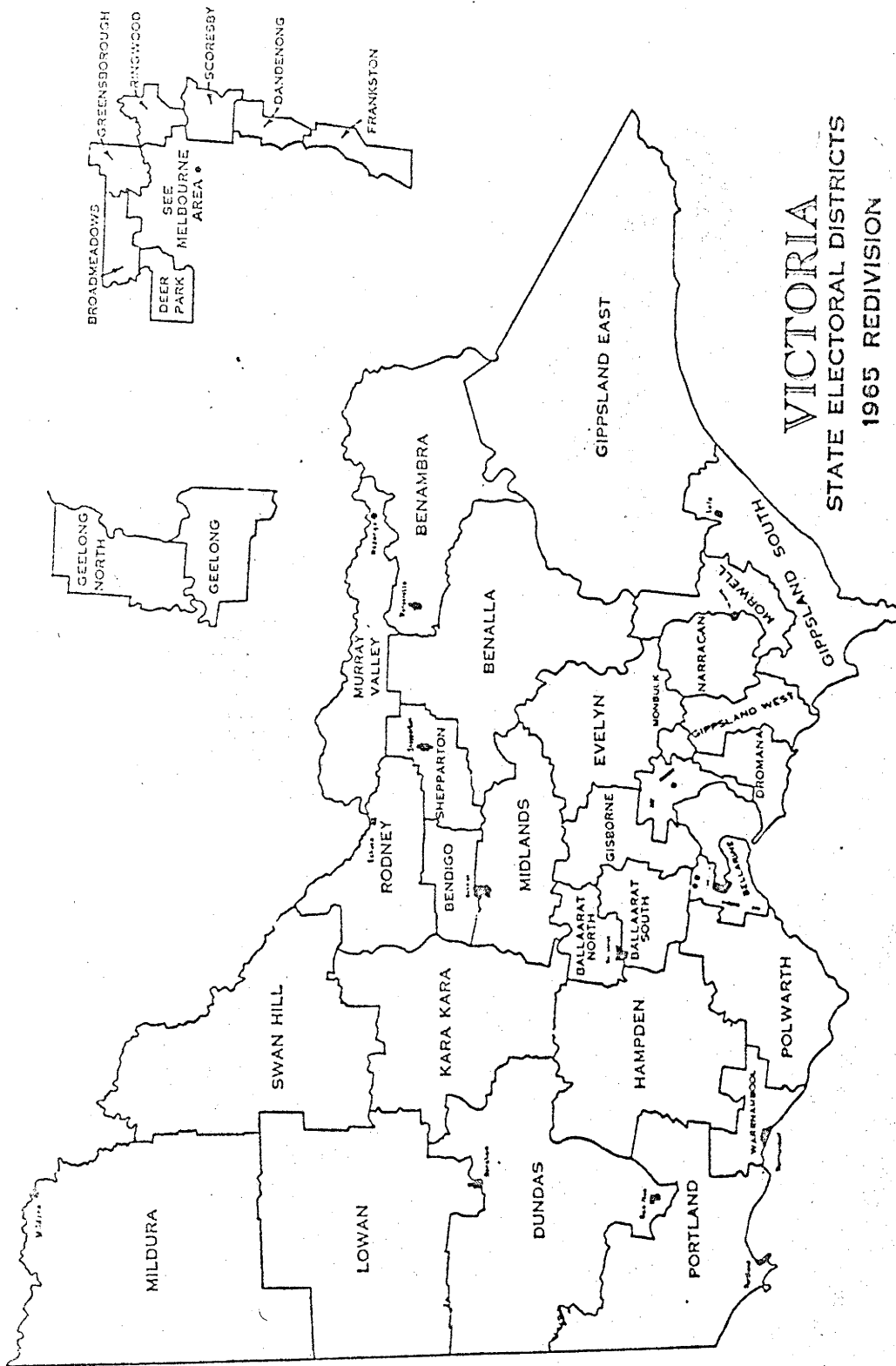
APPENDIX C

STATE AND FEDERAL ELECTORAL DIVISIONS

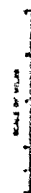


1965 REDIVISION
STATE ELECTORAL DISTRICTS

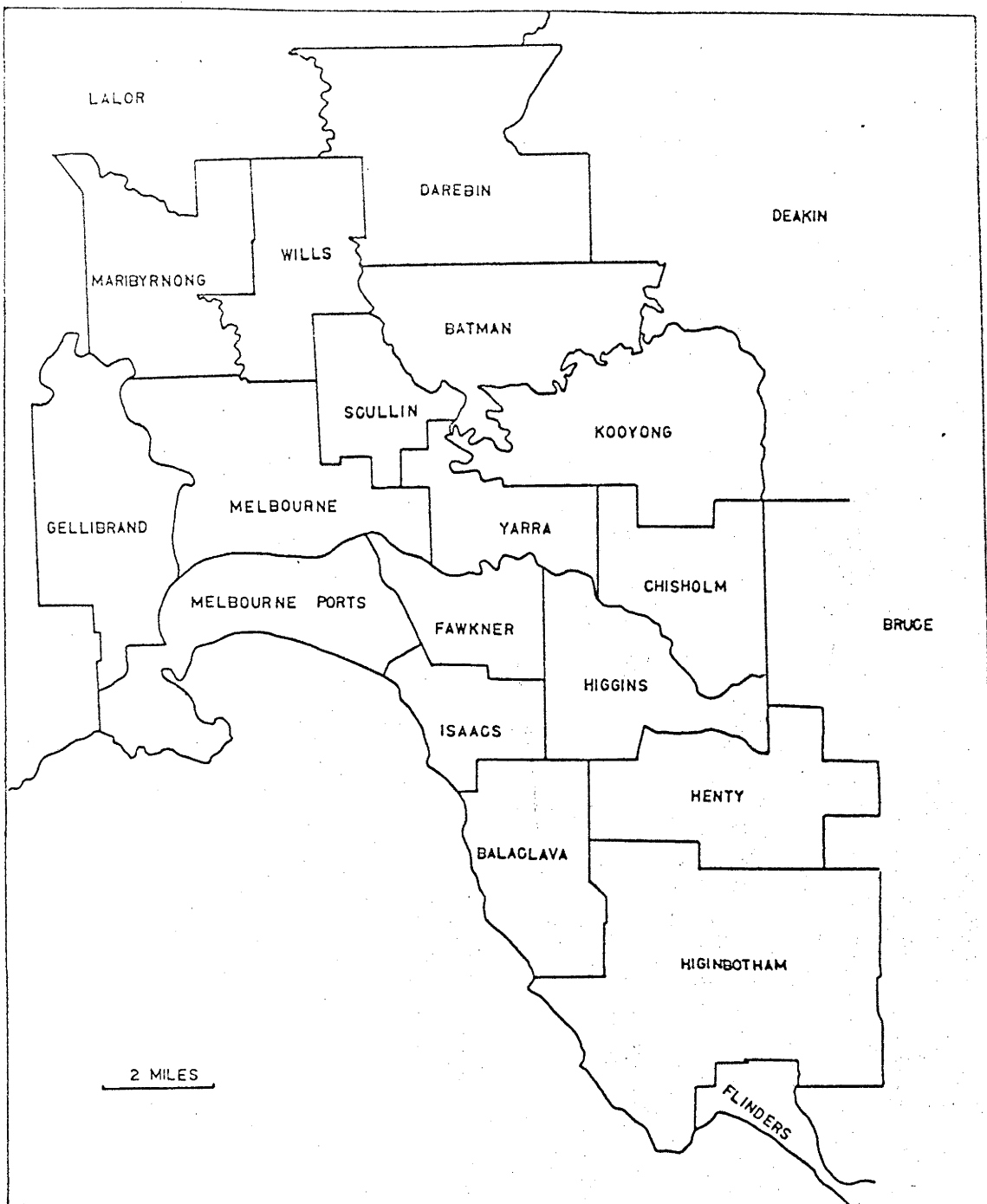




VICTORIA
STATE ELECTORAL DISTRICTS
1965 REDIVISION



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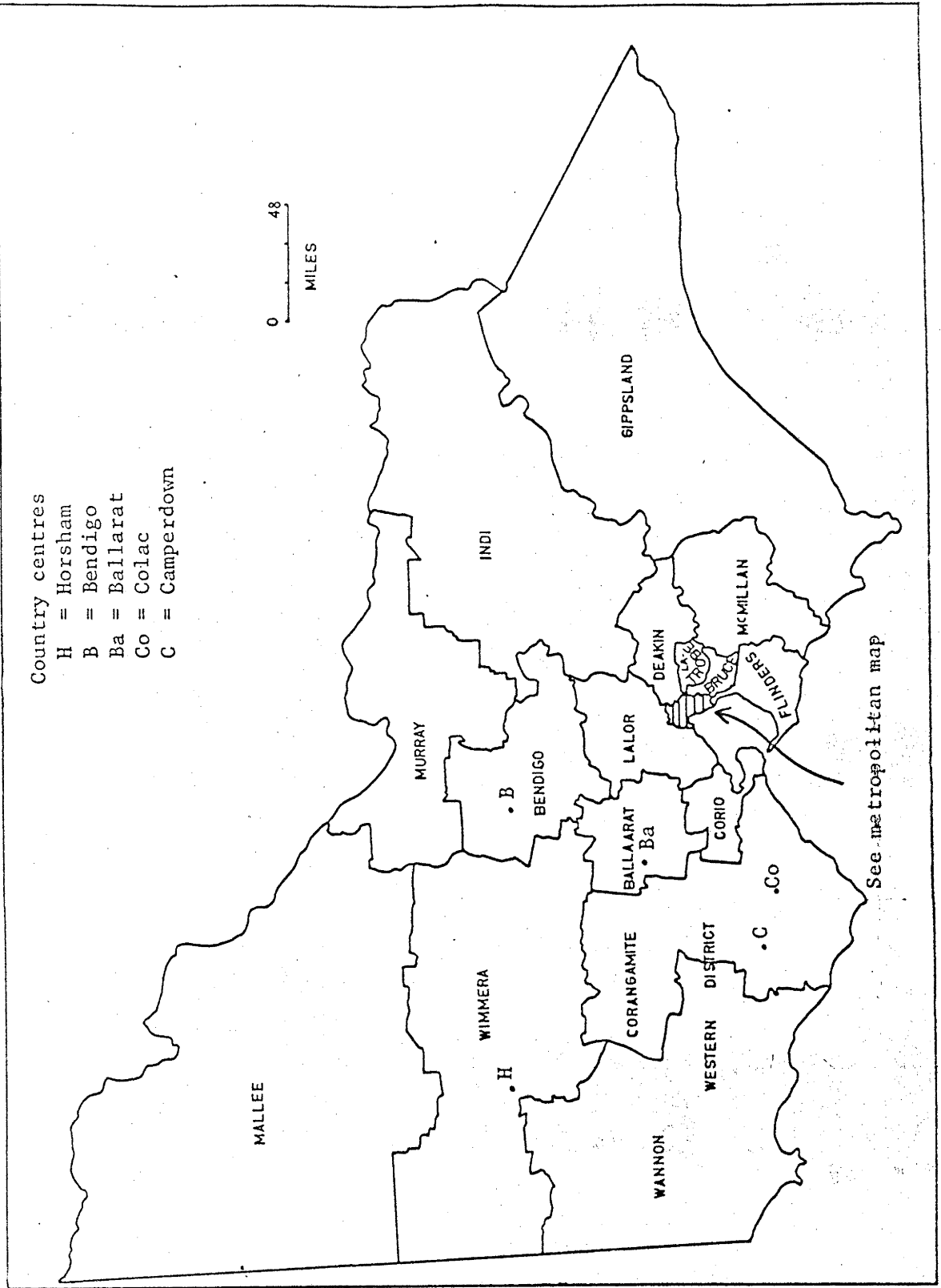
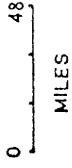


METROPOLITAN FEDERAL ELECTORATES
1955-68

COUNTRY FEDERAL ELECTORATES 1955-68

Country centres

- H = Horsham
- B = Bendigo
- Ba = Ballarat
- Co = Colac
- C = Camperdown



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* Bolac	1949-67
Box Hill North	1957-67
Burwood	1945-67
* Camperdown	1952-67
Canterbury	1954-67
Carlton	1966-67
Chatham	1961-67
* Colac	1948-67
Darling-East Malvern	1945-53
Deepdene	1945-67
* Derrinallum	1949-67
East Kew	1951-66
* Ecklin	1957-66
Eltham	1945-66
* Gellibrand	1960-66
Greensborough	1946-66
Greythorn	1964-67
Kew	1945-67
Kew North East	1953-66
Kew South East	1957-67
* Lorne	1955-67
* Nhill	1949-67
North Camberwell	1954-67
North Kew	1946-67
* Rupanyup	1949-67
* St. Arnaud	1949-66
* Skipton	1945-67
Studley Park	1961-64
West Hawthorn	1958-67

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F. SURVEY DATA

Australian Public Opinion Polls, Melbourne.

Australian Survey Project: a national survey of political attitudes carried out by the Department of Political Science, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University. The survey is based on a sample of 2054 Australian voters randomly selected in 80 federal divisions and interviewed in September-October 1967. The sample is described in Michael Kahan and Don Aitkin, Drawing a Sample of the Australian Electorate, Occasional Paper No.3, Department of Political

Science, R.S.S.S., Australian National University, Canberra, 1968, and a first report on the substantive concerns of the survey is in course of preparation.

The writer is indebted to Dr D.A. Aitkin and Michael Kahan for making available material from the survey.

G. INTERVIEWS AND CORRESPONDENCE

In addition to conversations with incumbent Liberal parliamentarians and party officers, interviews and correspondence with the following persons contributed information about the pre-Liberal organisations in which they were active members. Unless otherwise indicated, all interviews were in Melbourne between February and July 1967.

Sir William Anderson (deceased 1968)
 F.M. Bradshaw
 R.T. Breen
 S.F. Brown (Horsham)
 F.J. Davis
 The Hon. T.T. Hollway
 Sir Wilfred Kent Hughes, M.H.R.
 G.S. MacLean
 The Hon. Sir T.K. Maltby (Geelong)
 D.G. McOmish
 C.H. McWiggan
 C.P. Moulton
 C.A. Pullman
 Dr N.T.H. Schafer
 R.N. Stokes, M.L.A.