

Australian Political Parties
Prime Ministers and Parties - David Adams - 6 August 2008

1. Some introductory comments.
2. Some facts.
3. The multiple elements of “the party”. The “law of curvilinear disparity”!
4. Two metaphors.
5. Episodes in the lives of Leaders and parties.
 - Menzies *founding* a party.
 - Whitlam *reshaping* one.
 - Gorton *dividing* one.
 - Fraser *duchessing and strongarming* one.
 - Hawke *hijacking* one?
 - Keating *Leading* one.
 - A fragment about Howard. (Wayne Errington)
 - A fragment about Rudd. (Rick Kuhn)
6. The prime ministerialisation/presidentialisation/personalisation of parties?

Not a lecture (directly) on the power of the Prime Minister.

Every generalisation is a precarious victory over the infinite complexity of facts.

2. Some facts.

PM	Leader of the Opposition
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Chifley (2)</i> Menzies (6)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Holt (McEwen) Gorton McMahan <i>Whitlam (2)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Fraser (3)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Hawke (3)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Keating (2)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Howard (4)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Rudd</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Menzies (2) <i>Chifley</i> <i>Evatt (3)</i> <i>Calwell (3)</i> <i>Whitlam (2)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Snedden Fraser <i>Whitlam</i> <i>Hayden</i> <i>Hawke</i> Peacock Howard Peacock Hewson Downer* Howard <i>Beazley (2)</i> <i>Crean*</i> <i>Latham</i> <i>Beazley*</i> <i>Rudd</i> Nelson</p>

(Labor leaders in *italics*.) - *Did not lead the party to an election.

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Holt	
(McEwen)	
Gorton	
McMahon	
<i>Whitlam (2)</i>	Snedden
	Fraser
Fraser (3)	<i>Whitlam</i>
	<i>Hayden</i>
	<i>Hawke</i>
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3. The multiple elements of party.

1. Identifiers. Regular voters. 2007 – 77% identify with one of the major parties. (25% strong identifiers.) 45% always voted for the same party.
2. Members. Active and inactive.
3. Office holders at local/state/national levels.
4. Paid officials. (Advertising and research firms.)
5. Elected members of (State and) Commonwealth Parliaments/Governments. (PM dealing with State Premiers and Leaders of the Opposition.)
6. Leadership of the Parliamentary Parties. Ministers and their shadows. (Staff.)

PM's multiple dealings and relationships with these elements of the party:

Within 6. Different strands of opinion/tendencies/factions. Choice of ministers.

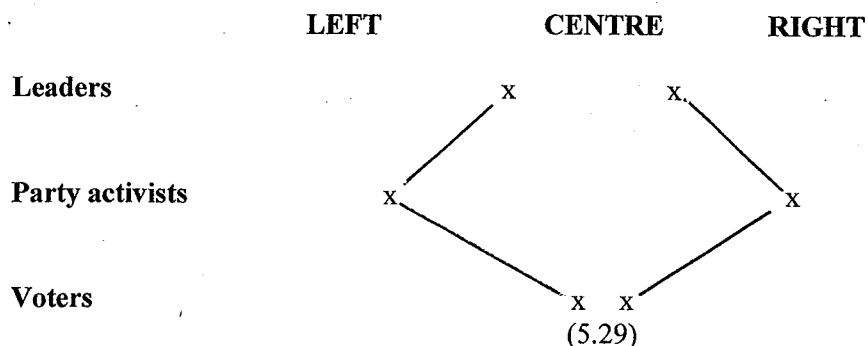
Within 5. PM is PM because of numbers in the party room. And can cease being PM because of the numbers.

With 4 – particularly at election times. Smooth relations; rocky relations.

With 3, 2 and 1 – morale, willingness to work/vote for the party.

An aside on "the law of curvilinear disparity" (J D May).

The gist.



But ...

Problems with "left" and "right". Radical; conservative – economic, social, cultural issues.

Vertical as well as horizontal differences amongst leaders and amongst activists.

Sometimes leaders aren't moderates/centrists. Latham/Hewson. Sometimes activists aren't "extremists"/non-centrists – concern for getting candidates elected.

Alerts us to leaders having to balance different views (Nelson) or maybe deciding to try to lead/change the prevailing views:

Hawke and Keating on economic reform.

Hewson and Fightback!

Howard on WorkChoices.

An aside on this aside. Katherine Betts. **Candidates** (blend of leaders [some of the winning candidates] and activists [losing candidates]) and **voters** in Australian elections from 1987 to 2001.

Gap between candidates' attitudes and voters' attitudes on a range of issues. Gap particularly marked between Labor candidates and voters. Four broadly "right wing" propositions culled from a wider set of questions. Economic issues different for Coalition voters/candidates.

For example: 2001	Coalition Voters	Coalition cands	Gap	Lab Voters	Lab cands	Gap
Government help for Aborigines gone too far.	58.2	41.7	(+16.5)	30.6	4.6	(+26)
Death penalty reintroduced for murder.	62.3	27.2	(+35.1)	53.2	4.5	(+48.7)
All boats carrying asylum seekers should be turned back.	41.8	7.3	(+34.5)	32.4	2.3	(+30.1)
Reduce taxes rather than spend more on social services.	50.7	65.5	(-14.8)	36.5	3.4	(+33.1)

Different strands of opinion for Leaders, particularly PMs and Leaders of Opposition, to take into account.

4. Two metaphors for how PMs operate.

D C Somervell, 1952. *Headmasters*. Can be great (or not) in different ways.

Good or less good with students, staff, governors, parents. Some seem good from the outside but not by those who see them daily at closer quarters. And some are good inside but fail to develop a reputation outside and "on which reputation of his school depends".

And so with PMs. Sovereign. Cabinet. House of Commons. Party. Press. Nation. Whole World. [State premiers in Australia.]

Party matters in six (even seven) of those seven relationships.

Glyn Davis. *Gang leaders*. 1992. In 1920s social scientists found gang leadership "provisional and contingent". Ability, guile. Continuously shifting alliances.

"It can be argued that mainstream Australian political parties resemble a street gang." The need for guile. Shifting alliances. The occasional thumping!

Two perspectives. Hierarchy and relative order (Somervell) but deals, trades, alliances (Davis). Do different PMs operate more in one way than another? Do they switch from one to the other?

5. Episodes in the lives of Leaders and parties.

Menzies founding a party.

1943. Non-Labor defeat. New party, new name, new “nationwide political movement”.

“We must match Labor’s organisation.” A permanent secretariat in Canberra.

Not by Menzies alone, but ...

Liberal: progressive, the individual, rejecting the socialist panacea.

Defeat in 46 but victory in 49. Bank nationalisation, petrol rationing, anti-communism, child endowment.

In office till 1966. Nearer the Headmaster; MPs with military service in WW2. Near-run things in 1954 and 1961. The myth of winning on communist preferences in 1961. DLP.

A party that has been in power 1949-72, 1975-83, 1996-2007. Only long Labor period: 1983-96.

Whitlam reshaping one.

1963: 36 faceless men. “A coterie of State branch officers.” Leaders joining the Conference/Executive.

The party, the policy, the people - 1969.

Whitlam’s resignation and re-election in 1968. 38-32. “Whose party is this – ours or his?” (Cairns.)

1972. Not a landslide. 2.5% on top of 7% in 1969.

Elements of the headmaster/school-teacher. The pedagogue.

Gorton dividing one.

Falling in part because of Whitlam.

Dividing the Liberals as never before. (Hancock) Centralisation. Foreign investment. Defence. Personal behaviour: not headmasterly enough for some in the party.

The parliamentary party; State premiers; DLP.

33-33. The “myth” of the casting vote?

[Ainsley Gotto and Race Mathews. Hancock’s footnote. Marr’s footnote.]

Fraser duchessing and strongarming one.

Pat Weller, *Malcolm Fraser PM*. Chapter 5. *The Party Leader – Duchessing and Strongarming.*

The parliamentary party. Party elections. (Peacock versus Fraser.) The party organisation. State divisions. Eggleton.

PM head of the federal party but that position is not one of command. (Shifting alliances – Davis. Draws substantially on Weller/Fraser.) The Prefect.

Hawke and Keating. Two gang-leaders? The Corleones from The Godfather? The Sopranos? Both became leaders by pulling down their predecessors: Hayden and Hawke.

Hawke (and Keating) hijacking a party?

The outsider.

New policies. Economic liberalism.

Resentment at "elite pluralism".

Not true to Labor's tradition (David Day). Hawke: Day quite wrong; missed the point. Barry Jones: are there any core beliefs we would never abandon?

Keating Leading one.

The Placido Domingo speech. "Leadership" in the 1996 campaign.

Loved/admired by the "true believers". Dawkins: when PK took over "the party didn't think it stood for anything." Putting heart and soul back into the party. Mabo. The Republic.

Leading party out of office. Keating/staff and the ALP Federal secretariat in 96.

Aside: from egomania to megalomania? The two narcissisms. Vanity. Pride. Dog. Cat.

ANOP. A third – hatred. Arrogant and out of touch. Third - dislike but respect his courage and ability. A third admire him. Stimulating. Sex appeal!

A fragment about Howard. (Wayne Errington)

Gerard Henderson. John Howard more like a Labor politician than any other conservative leader all the way back to 1901. *Tribal*. Preferment for (qualified) supporters. Unlike Fraser and Menzies. And electoral goodies.

Working closely with Loughnane, Federal Director of Liberal Party to maintain the unity of the Government's message.

A fragment about Rudd. (Rick Kuhn)

Shades of Hawke and Keating? Keating: (new) leadership. Hawke: 2020 summit.

Hawke on Rudd. Intellectual. In touch with working families. Calm. Different to Mark Latham. He doesn't frighten the horses. Totally sane.

Keatingesque arrogance? A barrier to Rudd becoming leader – caucus members bridling at his "overbearing nature and overweening ambition." Competence.

The campaign. "Vote for Rudd, he's slightly different." Peter Hartcher: John Howard without the nasty bits.

Status quo minus the unpalatable policies (WorkChoices, Iraq and Howard himself) and with the addition of some attractive ones (climate change, education, hospitals). Risk-averse.

Selection of the ministry – PM not caucus (Keating did it – effectively – 1993).

6. The prime ministerialisation/presidentialisation/personalisation of parties?

2001. "Elections are now more Presidential than ever. The Leaders carry the focus for the whole campaign period. People talked about the election as a choice between Howard and Beazley." (Geoff Walsh, National Sec of ALP.)

Similarly in 2007 with Howard and Rudd.

Other ministers and shadows playing supporting roles. Most publicity when Tony Abbott had a bad, bad day – apologising to Bernie Banton, turning up late to a Press Club debate and then swearing at Nicola Roxon. Debates with Costello and Swan, Turnbull and Garrett.

Some numbers about Howard and Rudd in a moment. Rudd was *very* popular.

But how **much** do leaders count in people's voting decisions? Bean and McAllister's number-crunching in the AES. In 2007 they conclude "Rudd's substantially greater popularity than Howard told in the end, with a net leadership effect of 1.4% to Labor."

Industrial relations (WorkChoices) a net benefit to the ALP of 1.7%.

Leadership effects may have other less tangible effects. A "good press". Party morale.

Clarity of policy differences may hinge on Leader's (in)ability to articulate those differences. Beazley's prolix delivery. John Clarke as Beazley: "that's a very good question. Let me answer it in nine parts." Rudd's skill in linking WorkChoices to Family Values.

The dreadful leadership of McMahon in 1972. But Labor (under the Whitlam at his peak) had a swing of only 2.5% and lost support in three States.

So we shouldn't overstate the impact of the Leader.

Biggest impact in UK elections was 1983. After the Falklands War. Margaret Thatcher and Michael Foot – 4 per cent. Worth a lot of seats. *Significant. But relatively modest.*

Senior and van Onselen (*AJPS*) June 2008. Leadership effects in Australian elections 1990-2004.

Modest but significant. And over time?

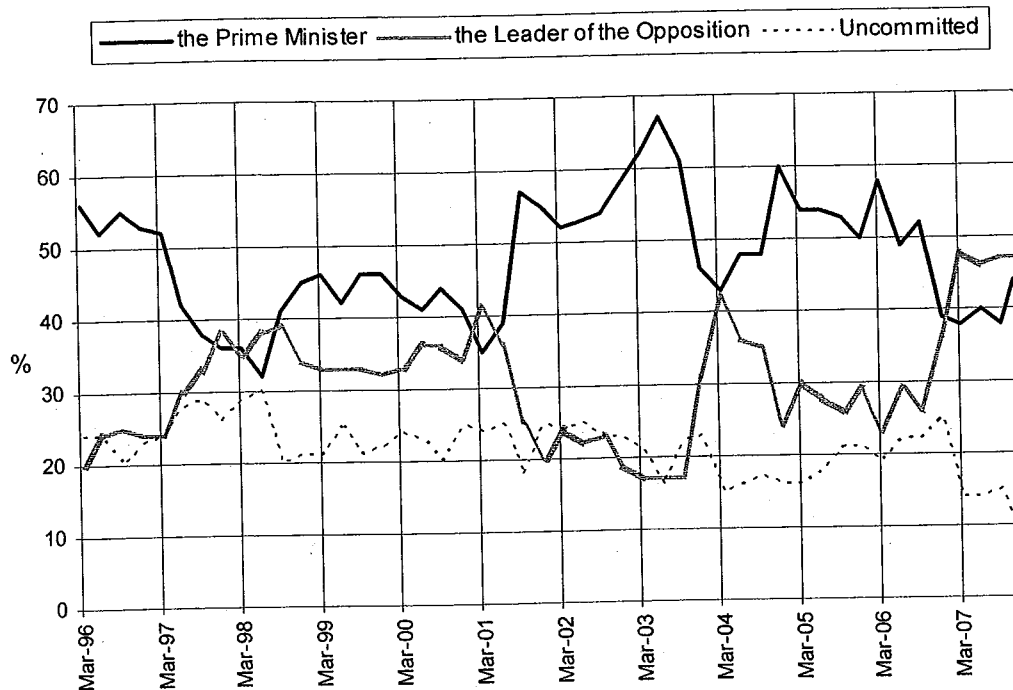
"It is well-established that the popularity of major party leaders generally exert an influence on the vote choice in Australian elections. However, *although impressionistic evidence may suggest that the importance of leaders is increasing, there has been little systematic multi-election evidence to support this trend.*"

More research is needed!!

So we need to be careful, as always, about 'common sense' and 'impressions'.

A few numbers to finish with.

Who would be the better Prime Minister?



Newspoll: Quarterly figures, March 1996 to November 2007

Opposition leaders:

Kim Beazley: 19 March 1996–22 November 2001
 Simon Crean: 22 November 2001–2 December 2003
 Mark Latham: 2 December 2003–18 January 2005
 Kim Beazley: 28 January 2005–4 December 2006
 Kevin Rudd: 4 December 2006 onwards.

Reading

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