THE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSALS FOR ELECTORAL REDISTRIBUTION

One of the worst aspects of the proposed new electoral boundaries is their impact on country people.

The Government is introducing proposals to cover all States with the exception of Western Australia.

The Opposition parties were united in rejecting the new boundaries overwhelmingly.

We considered the redistribution to be unnecessary and undesirable. They weakened the electoral position of the Liberal and Country Parties in a way which we consider to be unfair.

The Government gained office both in 197? and 197? with less than 50 per cent of first preference votes and it commands a majority of five in the House.

Yet it is attempting to improve its position without improving its vote. If the redistribution were to go through, the Government majority could go up to 11 seats without any increase in the Labor Party's total share of the vote.

This is to be done by reducing Labor majorities slightly in its safe seats, and adding these voters to adjoining marginal seats. This is especially the case in Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania.

In the country districts of New South Wales two seats now held by the Country Party would be affected. Paterson would be lost to Labor and the Country Party hold on Hume would be weakened.

In addition to this however, there is a gross inequity in the way boundaries have been drawn so that huge country seats have more voters in them than small urban seats.
An example is the Victorian electorate of Mallee, which has been redrawn with an area of 23,000 square miles as compared with say, Latrobe in the Melbourne metropolitan area, covering 162 square miles, yet the Mallee electorate would have more voters in it at 66,410 under the redistribution, than Latrobe with 61,930.

There is another even more glaring example in Queensland where the new seat of Flynn would cover 320,000 square miles and contain 63,811 voters, against 58,537 voters in the 715 square mile metropolitan seat of Glasgow.

The Opposition parties say that this redistribution is unnecessary, undesirable, and an attempt by the Government to improve its position, not by governing better, but by manipulating the laws over electoral matters.
There is more evidence of economic mismanagement in recent figures for public and private sector employment, which show a movement from private enterprise into the public service.

Employment in the public sector rose by 75,000 during the year to March 31 while in the private sector it fell by 139,900.

This is the worst decline in private sector employment since 1947, far exceeding the decline in 1960-61.

Employment in the key manufacturing sector slumped to its lowest level since July 1968, with a decrease since May of 126,900.

The cost of increased public sector employment, conservatively estimated on the basis average weekly earnings during the 12 months to March 1975 was $550 million. Assuming 20% inflation in the next 12 months, that wage bill will rise to $660 million. These figures mean that national priorities are now back to front.

It would be far better to stop the decline in private sector employment than to continue with a mopping up action that has produced such a massive increase in public sector employment during the past year.
GAGGING THE PARLIAMENT

The leader of Government business in the house Mr Daly, effectively gagged the parliament during its first week with a motion that prevented the Opposition from debating the issues of the day.

The Opposition was still able to ask questions and thus bring into the open the failure of the Government's extravagant plan to borrow 2,000 million dollars from the Arab nations of the Middle East, a scheme which if it had come off, would have mortgaged the nation's future for a whole generation.

The Opposition was also able to press the Government over the conflict which has developed within the cabinet and the caucus over the environment which resulted in a humiliating defeat for the Minister for the Environment, Dr Cass.

But the proper way to ventilate matters such as these is by bringing on discussion through debate on matters of public importance.

Mr Daly's motion stopped this because it prevented such debates until the Family Law Bill was passed, as it now has been.
Library Digitised Collections

Author/s:
Fraser, Malcolm

Title:
Electoral redistribution, employment, gagging the parliament

Date:
24 May 1975

Persistent Link:
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/40650

File Description:
Electoral redistribution, employment, gagging the parliament

Terms and Conditions:
Copyright courtesy of Malcolm Fraser. Contact the University of Melbourne Archives for permission requests.