

Editorial Introduction

This edition of the *Queensland Review* focuses on contemporary political and economic issues which, to a significant extent, select themselves. The dramatic success of Pauline Hanson's One Nation in the Queensland election, followed by its less impressive showing in the Federal sphere, provide a backdrop to four of the papers.

Extensive debate has occurred over the role of the media in One Nation's rise. Within this context, Stephen Crofts provides a critical appraisal of the dearth of serious political debate in the media, particularly television. He illustrates how One Nation exploited widespread cynicism towards mainstream politics, as most forcefully expressed by populist radio talkback hosts.

Christopher Lee questions 'explanations' of One Nation's success that rely on simple stereotypes of regional Queensland as 'redneck' territory. In his discussion of regional politics, he highlights the failure of State and Federal governments, as well as a variety of 'metropolitan intellectuals', to understand and address the problems faced by regional communities. Lee uses the example of a Toowoomba redevelopment project to illuminate the complexities of local, regional and State politics.

The issue of governmental abdication of responsibility also figures prominently in Geoff Dow's evaluation of One Nation. He analyses how the party articulated popular resentment against programs of privatisation and deregulation ostensibly designed to enhance international competitiveness. In this respect, One Nation has drawn to a significant degree on a substantial body of anti-liberal conservative analysis. The paper goes on to provide a systematic overview of anti-liberal policy prescriptions, both conservative and radical, arguing that mainstream parties run a considerable risk in ignoring alternatives to globalisation and the apparent demands of international competitiveness.

Anthony van Fossen's paper locates the One Nation phenomenon within an international political-economic context, which has seen the rise of ethnic nationalist movements in numerous countries. One Nation's anti-privatisation stance is interpreted in relation to the failure of governments to achieve full employment, shifts in the international balance of political-economic power and the grievances felt by One Nation supporters, particularly against the effects of 'economic rationalism'.

The final two papers are concerned with current employment and industrial relations questions. Firstly, Amanda Roan examines the effectiveness of Equal Employment Opportunity with respect to training policies and programs. Drawing on research into two manufacturing industries in Brisbane, the paper questions the extent to which an expansion of training has led to better employment outcomes for women employees. The issue addressed by Tom Bramble incited passions no less intense than those generated by One Nation. The dispute between Patrick Stevedores and the Maritime Union of Australia came to a head in April 1998, following a long campaign by the Government to 'reform' the Australian waterfront.

Bramble provides a critical evaluation of the outcomes of the dispute, arguing that the MUA conceded far more than was necessary.

Overall, this should prove to be an interesting, often entertaining, set of essays on important contemporary topics.'

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