Opinion Polls and Baseball Bats
What Really Went on in the Queensland State Election

CHRIS MITCHELL

I t should tell astute observers much about the divided nature of modern Australia that most of the commentators about the rise of One Nation and, indeed, almost all the latest tome on the subject (Two Nations) have been written by people outside of Queensland—the birthplace of One Nation.

A part from Nick Rothwell and a couple of other grown-ups, the commentators have almost all got it wrong. Conservative protest politics has a long history in Queensland. Remember the Labor Split, the Confederate Action Party, the CEC? The interaction of such politics plus an optional preferential voting system with an electorate just as disenfranchised with John Howard as it was with Paul Keating, which still had (to quote Wayne Goss) its baseball bat in hand and which saw the ‘unread head’ Mrs Hanson as an underdog, was always bound to deliver a large amount of support to One Nation, even though most people knew they were voting out of protest.

But what really sealed the June 13 Queensland State election were the campaigns of the governing Coalition parties and the Labor opposition.

The entire thrust of the Government’s campaign was negative, with a plea for One Nation preferences. The Borbidge National/Liberal Coalition Government had already accepted—because of its own internal research and the feedback from the wiser heads in the Government—that One Nation had been on a roll since the previous October.

In private conversations, with people as high up as Premier Borbidge himself, many in the Coalition expressed concern at the negativity of the Coalition’s campaigning. They felt that theirs had been a service delivery government, with a good record on hospitals and road building and that those messages had been lost in the campaign. They felt the campaign was giving their own base voters permission to lodge a protest so long as they channelled their vote back to the conservatives via their optional second preferences. And once the Liberal Party opted to preference One Nation, small ‘l’ Libs in Brisbane were always going to repeat their 1989 desertion of the conservatives.

For its part, Labor focused almost entirely on the one-line—it was either a stable Beattie government or a rag-tag Coalition government relying on One Nation support. Mr Beattie was on-message throughout the campaign. He spoke of a five per cent unemployment target—which was an international dry run for Kim Beazley’s subsequent five per cent campaign—and constantly referred to the ‘rag-tag Coalition’. Observers of politics in Brisbane will have heard this phrase thousands of times in the two months leading up to the election.

But, beyond that, both sides of politics had internal polling several months ahead of the election showing One Nation at near 30 per cent throughout Central Queensland.

After Premier Borbidge sacked Trevor Perrett—his then Minister for Resources and Primary Industry—for his admission to The Courier-Mail that he had carried on a relationship with a murdered prostitute, The Courier-Mail polled his seat of Barambah four-and-a-half months before the State election. That poll showed One Nation’s Dorothy Pratt at 28 per cent. The Cou-

DOUBLE STANDARDS REGARDING EMPLOYMENT. One the one hand, we praise young people who undertake volunteer work. On the other hand, we hold in high regard those who have found employment. Yet woe betide anyone who offers or accepts any arrangement in between. It is a ‘no-go’ area—although it is self-evidently a fertile field for mutually acceptable and agreeable arrangements between the parties.

It is inconceivable that the present system, with all its inflexibilities, will be allowed to continue indefinitely to exclude so many of our young people from the world of work. Not even the most relentless demonization of the motives of small business employers could achieve that end. The struggle for liberalization of the existing wage regime has echoes of the campaign against slavery, invoking Ernst H owe’s description of it as a ‘bitter conflict with contemporary sentiment and the interests of gigantic power’. Liberty. Freedom. The long struggle to break the shackles of workplace regulation goes on.

NOTES

2 The 7.30 Report, 28 February 1997.
3 Checkpoint Charlie, a submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Youth Unemployment, 1997.

Bob Day is Managing Director of Homebush A ward W inning Homes Pty Ltd and President of the South Australian HIA. This is an amended version of his submission to the AIRC inquiry into Junior Rates of Pay.
The exclusively negative advertising of the Coalition played into One Nation's hands

AFTER a single introductory positive commercial, every advertisement the Coalition team put together was an attack—even their single ‘issues’ ad on law and order was negative against themselves. In the United States, negative advertising is used to drive voters away from the polls; to push down your opponent’s numbers in a voluntary voting system. Australians who were resorting to the Coalition to push down One Nation’s hands. After a single introductory positive commercial, every advertisement the Coalition team put together was an attack—even their single ‘issues’ ad on law and order was negative against themselves. In the United States, negative advertising is used to drive voters away from the polls; to push down your opponent’s numbers in a voluntary voting system. Australians who were resorting to the Coalition to push down One Nation’s hands. After a single introductory positive commercial, every advertisement the Coalition team put together was an attack—even their single ‘issues’ ad on law and order was negative against themselves. In the United States, negative advertising is used to drive voters away from the polls; to push down your opponent’s numbers in a voluntary voting system. Australians who were resorting to the Coalition to push down One Nation’s hands. After a single introductory positive commercial, every advertisement the Coalition team put together was an attack—even their single ‘issues’ ad on law and order was negative against themselves. In the United States, negative advertising is used to drive voters away from the polls; to push down your opponent’s numbers in a voluntary voting system. Australians who were resorting to the Coalition to push down One Nation’s hands. After a single introductory positive commercial, every advertisement the Coalition team put together was an attack—even their single ‘issues’ ad on law and order was negative against themselves. In the United States, negative advertising is used to drive voters away from the polls; to push down your opponent’s numbers in a voluntary voting system. Australians who were resorting to the Coalition to push down One Nation’s hands. After a single introductory positive commercial, every advertisement the Coalition team put together was an attack—even their single ‘issues’ ad on law and order was negative against themselves. In the United States, negative advertising is used to drive voters away from the polls; to push down your opponent’s numbers in a voluntary voting system. Australians who were resorting to the Coalition to push down One Nation’s hands. After a single introductory positive commercial, every advertisement the Coalition team put together was an attack—even their single ‘issues’ ad on law and order was negative against themselves. In the United States, negative advertising is used to drive voters away from the polls; to push down your opponent’s numbers in a voluntary voting system. Australians who were resorting to the Coalition to push down One Nation’s hands. After a single introductory positive commercial, every advertisement the Coalition team put together was an attack—even their single ‘issues’ ad on law and order was negative against themselves. In the United States, negative advertising is used to drive voters away from the polls; to push down your opponent’s numbers in a voluntary voting system. Australians who were resorting to the Coalition to push down One Nation’s hands. After a single introductory positive commercial, every advertisement the Coalition team put together was an attack—even their single ‘issues’ ad on law and order was negative against themselves. In the United States, negative advertising is used to drive voters away from the polls; to push down your opponent’s numbers in a voluntary voting system. Australians who were resorting to the Coalition to push down One Nation’s hands. After a single introductory positive commercial, every advertisement the Coalition team put together was an attack—even their single ‘issues’ ad on law and order was negative against themselves. In the United States, negative advertising is used to drive voters away from the polls; to push down your opponent’s numbers in a voluntary voting system. Australians who were resorting to the Coalition to push down One Nation’s hands. After a single introductory positive commercial, every advertisement the Coalition team put together was an attack—even their single ‘issues’ ad on law and order was negative against themselves. In the United States, negative advertising is used to drive voters away from the polls; to push down your opponent’s numbers in a voluntary voting system. Australians who were resorting to the Coalition to push down One Nation’s hands. After a single introductory positive commercial, every advertisement the Coalition team put together was an attack—even their single ‘issues’ ad on law and order was negative against themselves. In the United States, negative advertising is used to drive voters away from the polls; to push down your opponent’s numbers in a voluntary voting system. Australians who were resorting to the Coalition to push down One Nation’s hands. After a single introductory positive commercial, every advertisement the Coalition team put together was an attack—even their single ‘issues’ ad on law and order was negative against themselves. In the United States, negative advertising is used to drive voters away from the polls; to push down your opponent’s numbers in a voluntary voting system. Australians who were resorting to the Coalition to push down One Nation’s hands.

Chris Mitchell is editor-in-chief of Queensland Newspapers.