

## **FOREWORD by Rodney Cavalier**

*To The Worldly Art of Politics* edited by Michael Hogan and Ken Turner

Many of the scholarly projects to celebrate 150 years of responsible government in a sense suggested themselves. From the first meeting in 2002 of the Committee for the Sesquicentenary of Responsible Government in NSW 1856-2006 we had very clear ideas on what we hoped to achieve. Some of that intended achievement would be through the efforts of ourselves as writers and editors, some would be by commissioning others to realise what we thought were important gaps in the history of NSW politics.

The Committee intended always that there should be a new institutional history of the Parliament of New South Wales, biographical essays on the Premiers, the chronicling of all of the general elections of the nineteenth century and studies of the 1850s. The Liberal Party and its predecessors warranted a new history. The National Party had been exceptionally well served by earlier histories but they were decades earlier, a fresh treatment was what we asked for. The political history of the State was not just the story of the temporary majorities that formed in the Legislative Assembly, no less important were the many different stories of representation from the several regions of the State.

Scholars suggested projects to us. We were pleased to be able to support (without attempting a comprehensive summary of the projects that are coming to pass) studies of independents and minor parties, the franchise and electoral laws, the publishing of memoirs long since forgotten, Aborigines and their formal "protection", an atlas of electoral maps. The Parliament itself is maintaining a Biographical Register of all Members ever elected to it. All women who have ever stood for the Parliament are now a part of a remarkably comprehensive biographical register of their heterogeneous ranks.

The idea of a work celebrating the sublime art of politics arose directly out of the work of the Committee itself and the labours required in reading and checking the thousands of pages of manuscript that were coming our way. Michael Hogan and Ken Turner were devoted readers of the works of others as well as writers and editors on a plenitude of fronts. They proposed a publication wholly different to any other – an exploration of what had been good about the political process, the men and women who had brought ideals from across the ideological spectrum to their daily doings and career ambitions. The work would celebrate people uncelebrated any longer, one time giants such as Reg Downing and Jack Ferguson (the lynchpins of two long-term Labor governments) and people not ever celebrated because their work was against the grain of party discipline or majority fashion.

This book was not going to be saccharine nor a celebration of heroic self-destruction. For that reason, these pages do not proclaim the virtues of those who found the systems of party and government rotten only at the moment such systems ceased to advance them; one discounts the criticisms of those on the point of oblivion who were silent about the processes which brought them down while ever those processes were advancing them. In these pages, instead, you will read of the unending work of achievers, the work of committees, the drafting of reports, the search for words that express ideas that might just persuade parliament to act. The essays collected here include classics that have long demanded reprinting. They include the insights of insiders, participants, informed observers.

That responsible government survived and arguably prospered does not mean that such an outcome was certain. When Whitehall mandated self-government, popular elections and a cabinet drawn from the parliaments of the Australian colonies, it was making a bold step. 150 years later we have a good sense of the outcome. So much that was imposed by imperial legislation back then has survived – most obviously the system of responsible government itself. No one in the mainstream of politics has ever seriously suggested the separation of the executive from the parliament.

The most obvious triumph is the acceptance of the outcome in 53 general elections and all the by-elections in between. Although election outcomes have been unclear, governments have governed without a majority, governments have fallen without facing an election, the legitimacy of the processes has been accepted by all sides of politics. Even the dismissal of an elected government in 1932 had no ongoing consequences: the Governor of the day had not sought to deceive his Premier, he acquainted his Premier of his doubts and acted only after a final, formal warning. These were circumstances where no one could question that the Governor had acted honourably and openly, circumstances very different to the tawdry deception that was at the heart of the dismissal in 1975.

The rule of law has been a constant. The courts pre-existed the NSW Parliament. The common law pre-existed both courts and parliament. No one ever imagined they were too high and mighty for the law to reach them. Premiers and Ministers have been answerable to the courts civil and criminal, they have appeared before royal commissions and official inquiries. Sometimes their freedom was at issue. For breaches of the law, Members of Parliament will face prosecution. Some have served custodial sentences.

The clashes of Question Time and the joust of the hustings are the stuff of dramatic reportage and historical reconstruction. Commanding personalities vying for power will necessarily engage each other. It is the sincerity of their beliefs that makes their struggles so tempestuous. It cannot be otherwise in an adversary democracy. This book helps to explain why, amid all that shouting and tumult on the floor of the Houses and in the media, violence is so very foreign and assassination but a single occurrence.

At the core of the legitimate contest for power is an understanding of the rules of engagement and a recognition that winning and holding government depends upon persuasion of the citizen voters of NSW. General elections and the electoral processes of political parties are the frontline where ideals, theories and the development of policies are tested against the expectations of a sustaining majority. The achievement of power in all of its manifestations from a single constituency unto the leadership of the State depends upon persuasion. Having to fashion one's conduct and arguments according to the needs of persuasion has been the reason that politics is the sublime art.

Through this book Michael Hogan and Ken Turner have been able to realise the aspirations of so many in political science that art of politics needed understanding for how it operated in the real world. This worldly work is a credit to them.

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