

The Camp Candidate: A Policy Statement

Social issues have rarely interested politicians so that social injustices in our society have been allowed to continue unavenged. Because of jobs, family and position, many of us have been unable to fight back, but at election time we do have one politically dangerous weapon to wield, the vote. Now, more than at any other time, it is vital that we use our vote wisely. It is important that we are aware of the attitudes of the candidates. It is important to make our friends aware. In the voting booth we have the opportunity to strike a blow for the cause. We must make the most of that opportunity.

"We believe the present law is satisfactory and we will not alter it. In other words we do not believe that there should be abortion on demand. We do not believe in a political approach to abortion" — the Prime Minister speaking on "A Current Affair", Monday September 11 — and on homosexuality, "The present law is satisfactory, too." McMahon opposes the liberalisation of the laws prohibiting homosexual acts.

The laws which govern homosexuality and abortion are state laws, and a change in Federal law would affect only the ACT and NT. Mr McMahon agrees that the Nation looks to the Commonwealth for leadership on these matters but he is still against legalisation. A change in Federal law would encourage a more enlightened attitude within State Parliaments and uniform laws such as the divorce laws could be introduced throughout Australia at the instigation of the Commonwealth. An abortion which is legal in South Australia would no longer be illegal in Queensland.

In saying that he does not believe in a political approach to abortion, McMahon is saying that he does not believe that politicians should be concerned with an issue that affects the people as individuals. He is obviously out of touch with the opinion of his country. He is out of touch with the feelings of his own electorate, possibly because he does not live there.

A survey of Lowe electorate, McMahon's own electorate, has shown that abortion and homosexuality are political issues. The majority of people in Lowe want to see changes in these laws.

Surveys show a majority favour liberalisation of homosexuality

"I've got my eye on Billy's seat."



and abortion laws. Australia is one of the last countries in the world still retaining these laws.

Another of the few countries in the world that is still similarly repressive is Russia.

What effect would changing these laws have? Men do not have abortions and many women are lucky enough to fall pregnant only when they want to. If you are rich, intelligent and married an abortion is not difficult to obtain. The poor and unmarried girls; those who are kept ignorant of effective contraception, the very young woman; women whose contraceptive methods have failed, the unlucky. These women would benefit. Half the homosexuals in

Australia are not affected by the laws prohibiting homosexual acts. Female homosexuality is not illegal. There is no justification for making male homosexuality illegal. However if you are a male homosexual rich enough to own your own home and fortunate to find someone privately to sleep with you need never venture into known homosexual meeting places to become easy game for police action. Liberalisation of the law would help the poor, the lonely and the male homosexual.

Changing the laws would change public attitudes to all homosexuality. The people who have an irrational fear of homosexuals and homosexuality are forced to analyse their fears when there is no law to substantiate them. Changes in abortion laws would change attitudes to children and pregnancy. All children born would be wanted. There would be a more enlightened attitude towards irresponsibly large families and unmarried mothers would be seen as responsible members of the community and not just objects of charity.

A change in laws governing homosexuality and abortion, and also censorship and conscription would mean a strengthening of law and order. While the law is flouted or applied haphazardly respect for all law is undermined. While there is a law for the rich and one for the poor, the poor can only see law as authoritarian and not a system of mutually acceptable controls. While a large percentage of the population have committed offences, such as homosexual acts or abortion, considered criminal only by the standards of antiquated laws, corruption of the law is inevitable. Dr Wainer has shown some of the corruption that arose in Victoria as a result of popularly unacceptable abortion laws. This corruption extended to the upper echelons of the police force, undermining our whole society. The murder of Dr Duncan recently, in Adelaide, is an instance of violence against homosexuals that is unwittingly fostered by the law.

Whether Mr McMahon likes it or not; whether he is still unaware of it or not, homosexuality and abortion are political issues. Like Education, which was once fundamentally an area of state policy, governed by state laws, homosexuality and abortion are issues

that will be fought and won in the Federal sphere. If law and order is to be maintained in Australia, laws must be acceptable to Australian people. The existing laws on homosexuality, abortion, censorship and conscription are not acceptable to the majority of Australians.

Declaring myself to be a homosexual to society still has the newsmaking appeal of "Man Bites Dog." Minority groups in Australia have rarely fought back against discrimination. In a country that has boasted freedom for so long there should be nothing unusual in the fight to end discrimination or the vigilance against oppression; these are necessary in establishing and maintaining freedom. What should be unusual, but isn't, is that discrimination should exist at all and in our country there are large areas of discrimination, against women, blacks, the young, the poor, the aged, migrants and others. What should also be unusual, but isn't, is that our politicians ignore these areas of discrimination. The politicians have been too concerned with industry, development and the Gross National Product. In the twentieth century no-one could deny the importance of these issues but they must always take second place to the human dignity of the individual; the quality of life in our society.

We all belong to minority groups because these can be determined in so many ways, by sex, age, health, income, sexuality, religion, etc, so that when a law is passed to benefit a particular majority, we must see that there is ample compensation of any minority group that is adversely affected. Parliament should start by removing all laws which have oppressed minorities without aiding majorities one bit — laws such as those pertaining to abortion, male homosexuality, censorship and conscription. It should revise the compensation paid to such minorities as pensioners, who, unable to work, are denied their rightful share of our Nation's prosperity.

While the attitudes of employers remain prejudiced laws should be introduced to discourage discrimination. People should not be denied work on the basis of race, sex or sexuality. Possibly the largest area of discrimination in Australia is that against women. In Australia, the level of

education of women is below that of other Australians; 40% more males matriculate than females. Fewer women attend universities than men and the percentage of women in academic positions is very low. Women do not receive equal treatment in employment. Women not only bear the children for the entire population but are expected to rear them; to make a career of child-minding — a career that leaves them little worthwhile to do after their youngest child is five years old. In Australia, women do not have control of their own bodies, they can be forced by law to bear children they do not want.

Parliament has a duty to protect the rights of children; to ensure that all children born are wanted; that they are properly educated, and in Australia, there is a low level of educational expenditure in comparison with other countries. Many less-developed countries spend more on their children and do not consider child-care either a luxury or the unquestioned duty of housewives. Mr McMahon has stated that his party will not give eighteen year olds the vote until they have "full responsibilities as well as full privileges of the adult community." This is a further instance of how out of touch he is with the electorate, how ignorant he is of education. Young people must be encouraged to accept responsibility, not denied it. It is ridiculous to talk about sparing children for a few years from the horrors of adult life, but about eliminating those horrors. Giving eighteen year olds the vote would not be subjecting them to the horrors of adult life but removing one of the horrors of childhood — dependence.

Perhaps at election time, politicians can be seen as an oppressed minority; people whose individuality is denied them. I would fight against this. Proposals should be put to Parliamentarians as individuals so that issues can be won by reason, not lost by parties. This was once tried with the Federal debate on censorship. It split along party lines. The members of Parliament were willing to try assessing ideas on other than party lines but were afraid to put it to the real test. They need a few more members of Parliament with independent thinking to help them take the plunge. Too often have the parties been forced to mouth opposing

arguments avoiding sensible compromise — at the expense of we the electors.

I will agitate for a change in emphasis from defence to education in our economy. As a nation of islands we would be wise to keep a strong air force and navy. However, experience has shown that military supremacy can no longer win wars that do not have popular support. The USA could not defeat the Viet Cong. What hope would any power have of dominating Australians against their will. Australians, including my parents, have achieved for us a reputation as the world's greatest fighters. Nobody would willingly take us on. No-one could beat us on our home ground. In Vietnam, the enemy could be an old lady or a child, you could never be sure. In Australia, any army that tried to take over this country would be sure; their enemy would be every child, every old lady. On our home ground we would field a force of twelve million guerilla fighters. Young women, poofers, pensioners, uni-students — all united minorities would make hell for any opposition. And that is our greatest deterrent. That is our best defence; supported not with guns but with the fighting spirit of the population, and hospitals to keep our "troops" fit, and freedom to increase the will to fight, if challenged.

That freedom has been bred in me, and I was born to a situation where the freedom of homosexuals is challenged by law — and if you think it's un-Australian to be a homosexual, then think how un-Australian it would be to be a homosexual-Australian and not fight to have rights restored to me that are accorded to everyone else. The right to love someone, and the right to express my love physically, if that love is reciprocated.

David Widdup has been a resident of the electorate for 20 years and is a rate-payer of Strathfield. He was educated at South Strathfield primary school and Homebush Boys' High School — won the Homebush R.S.L.A.I.L.A. prize for "All-round Merit" in 1964, obtained a B.Sc. at the University of Sydney and M.Sc. at the University of New South Wales, and is presently engaged in research into the problems of under-achievement of women in our education system.